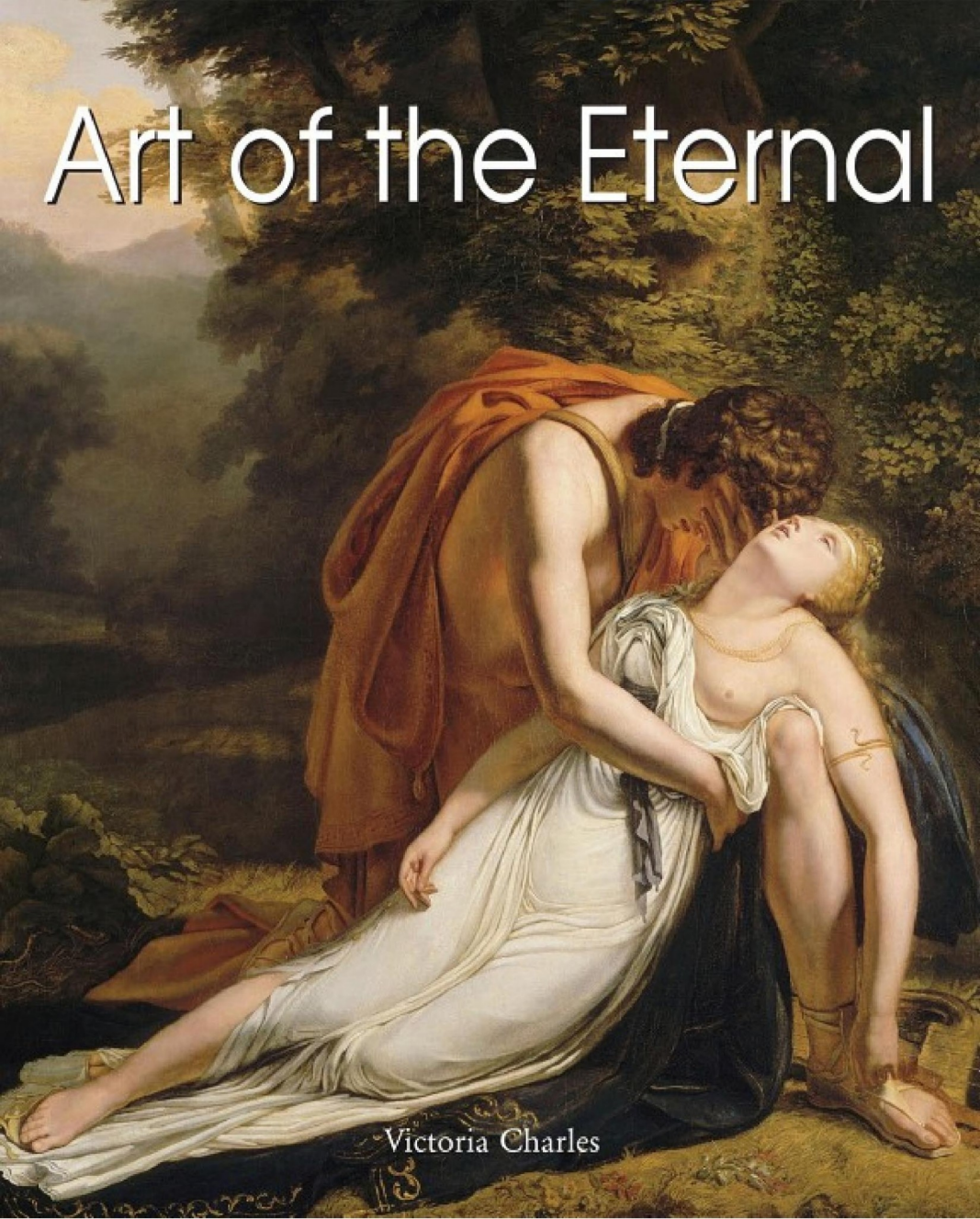


Art of the Eternal

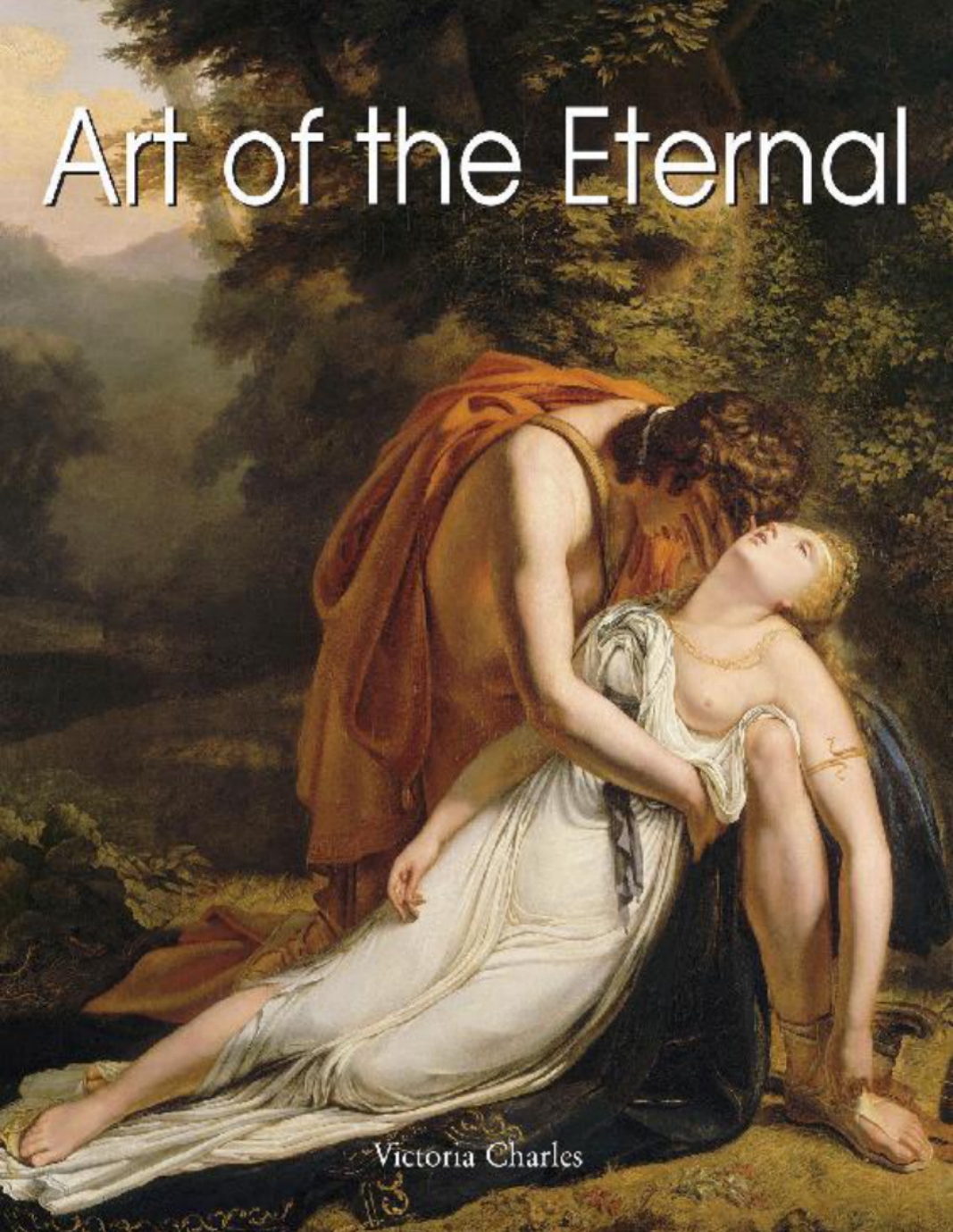


Victoria Charles

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Art of the Eternal



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Art of the Eternal



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The Buddhapada, 1st century BCE.
Limestone panel, 67.5 x 46.25 x 15 cm.
Great Stupa at Amaravati, Andhra Pradesh.

*“To see a world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour.”*

— William Blake, **Auguries of Innocence**

Introduction

*Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.*

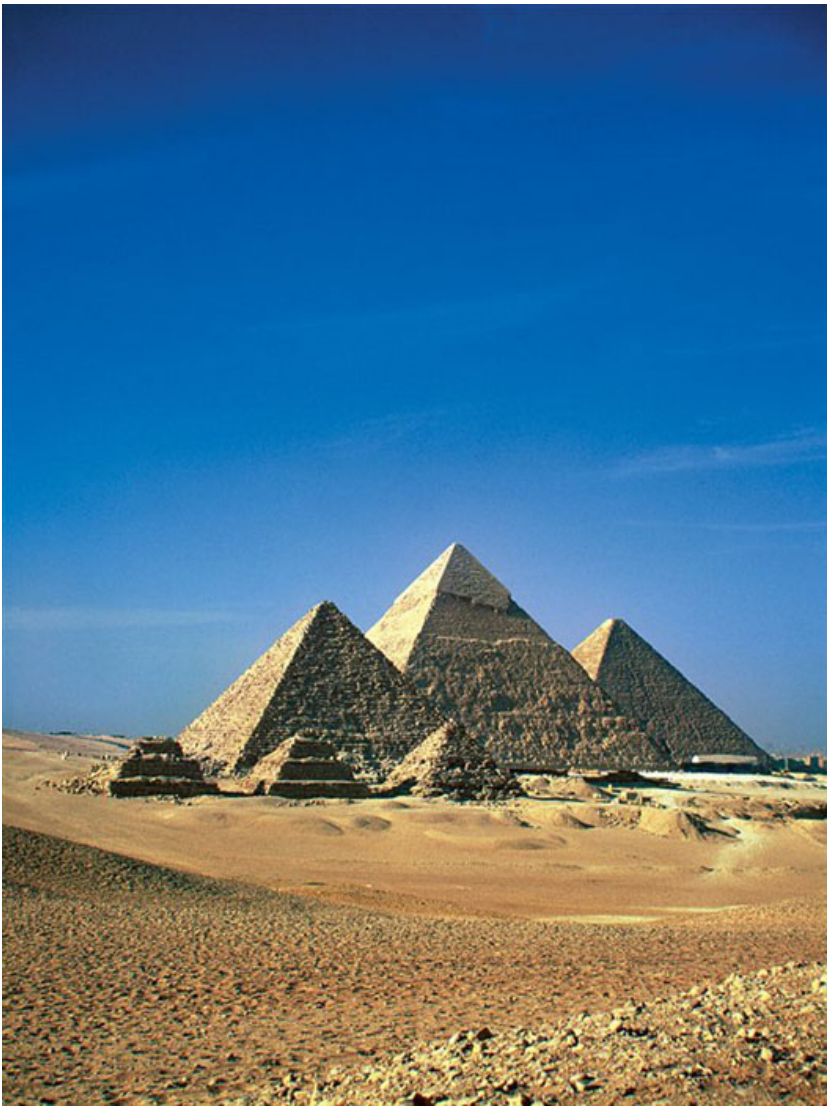
— **Sonnet 60**, William Shakespeare

The mysterious preoccupation with death and the afterlife has been constantly explored and revisited throughout time. The harsh reality of death and the aging process, act as a foundation for the belief in eternal life. Human beings in hopes of evading death, seek satisfaction in imagining a source that could grant immortality. Throughout time, symbols such as the 'Fountain of Youth', the 'Holy Grail', and the 'Philosopher's Stone' demonstrate both the alluring nature and popularity of this subject. As a result of nature, myth and religion, humans are continuously reminded of the impending notion of death. The stories of Sisyphus, Achilles, Icarus and a plethora of other legendary characters, act as didactic tools illustrating the impending fate that ensues when humans attempt to defy the laws and limits of the universe. Without death, humans would metaphorically be subjected to the fate of Sisyphus, with the unfortunate task of pushing a massive stone up a perpetual hill. Earthly immortality represents an unnatural entrapment which would greatly impede the cycle of life. The seasons constantly remind us of the transient nature of the universe; the revival and return of spring is dependent upon the dismal and sombre quality of winter. Mankind cannot escape death because it is deeply ingrained in the environment that surrounds it and therefore represents an integral part of what it means to be human.

However simply acknowledging the inevitability of death, does not provide us with the ability to perceive and understand the event itself. Human beings can prepare for the causes and circumstances of death, yet there is no explanation of the inmost reality of the fatal event. The circumstances of the mortal hour are infinitely varied, yet the crux of the experience is continually the same: there are a thousand modes of dying, but there is only one 'death'. Therefore, recognising the possibility of an indefinable death implies the existence of an unknown, an extremely overwhelming realisation. In order to come to terms with this fact, humans shift their focus to the possibility of an afterlife, finding comfort in imagining its splendour. John Keats embraces this

idea of the indefinite in his famous poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, expressing “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;” (Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, lines 11-12). Evidently, believing in an afterlife alleviates the fears often associated with death. The dying Socrates said “that he should trust his soul on the hope of a future life as upon a raft, and launch away into the unknown.” No emblem of our human state, with their mysteries, perils, threats and promises, could be more impressive than that of a vessel launched into the great deep. Thus the imagination broods over both the prophetic warnings and alluring invitations characterised by these mysterious havens of eternity.

The obsession with the Eternal is deeply embedded within history; entire civilisations and cultures have developed belief systems surrounding the prospect of life after death. Elaborate art works such as sarcophagi, tomb relics, religious paintings and even more abstract pieces, provide an excellent socio-cultural lens in which to understand specific beliefs, rituals and philosophical concepts regarding the afterlife. In addition, the juxtaposition between art and excerpts of poetry and prose creates a dynamic force, demonstrating the sheer intensity of this topic.



The Great Pyramids of Giza, c. 2600 BCE and later.
Egyptian Old Kingdom. Stone, Giza.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Triumph of Death*, c. 1562.
Oil on wood, 117 x 162 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

I. Ancient Conceptions of Death and the Afterlife

Examining Egyptian, Etruscan, Greek, and Roman works of art gives us an invaluable insight into some of the many ways that human beings prepared for death and the journey to another realm. The majority of the works of art within this chapter are tomb relics or other forms of funerary art which often depict the deities, ceremonies, customs and beliefs surrounding death and the afterlife. Exploring these cultures and their works of art collectively illustrates several of the recurring themes and beliefs that existed amongst these civilisations. For example each of these religions utilised some type of judgement process to determine the fate of the deceased, yet the details and myths surrounding this process are vastly different.



Titian (Tiziano Vecellio) *Adam and Eve*, c. 1550.
Oil on canvas, 240 x 186 cm. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1819.
Oil on canvas, 491 x 716 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris



Auguste Rodin. *The Gates of Hell*, 1880-1917.
Bronze, 635 x 400 x 85 cm. Musée Rodin, Paris.

II. Christian Doctrine of Death and the Afterlife

The first section outlines the dominant Christian views regarding death and the afterlife. With an emphasis on Patristic, Medieval and Modern doctrines, this exploration of the future life discusses both the components that have shaped Christianity over time, and the debates regarding the different realms of the afterlife. The second part of this chapter focuses more on the Christian symbolism integrated into artwork itself and how it relates to death and the

afterlife. The cross, the serpent, and various symbols of death are extensively discussed within this chapter, providing a more comprehensive study of Christ as Martyr, the Garden of Eden and heaven and hell. The art works within this chapter encompass mural paintings from the catacombs, representations of the crucifixion, 'Vanitas' sculptures and paintings and a plethora of other works.

III. Visions of the Afterlife

In addition to examining ancient civilisations and interpreting the ways in which people often came to terms with the advent of death, it is equally interesting to take a more symbolic approach exploring the subjective representations associated with the following aspects of the afterlife, purgatory and hell, heaven and Paradise and Reincarnation and Enlightenment. This section is intended to illustrate how artists visualise and imagine the unknown. From Islamic mosaics symbolising heaven to illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, from sculptures and paintings depicting the life of Buddha to modern interpretations of Paradise, these works of art not only emphasise the obsession with death and afterlife, but also to show the ways in which art as a form lends itself to this topic. For example, Islamic artists utilised unified lines and patterns to express ultimate perfection and harmony with the divine. These works also demonstrate the human quest to illustrate the 'unknowable', in efforts to grapple with death and the uncertainty of the afterlife.

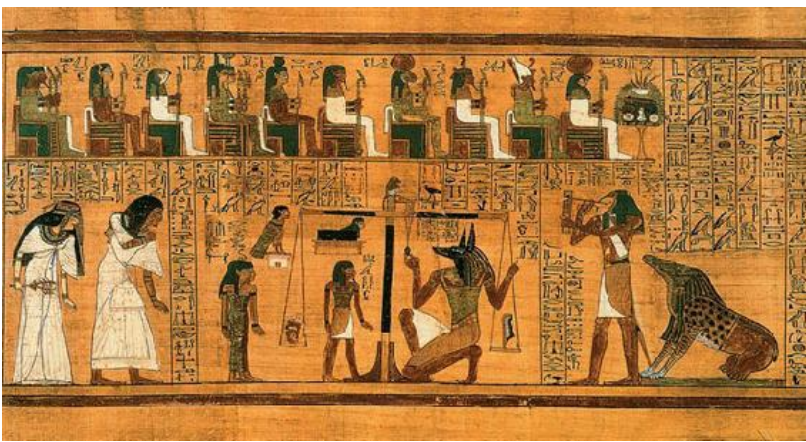


Funerary Mask of Tutankhamun, c. 1323 BCE.
Ancient Egyptian New Kingdom, 18th dynasty,
1549-1298 BCE. Gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian, quartz,
obsidian, turquoise, glass paste, 54 x 39.3 cm, weight: 11kg.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

Ancient Egyptians

When attempting to understand the concept of the afterlife and the people of ancient Egypt, we must first ask ourselves why they went to such lengths to

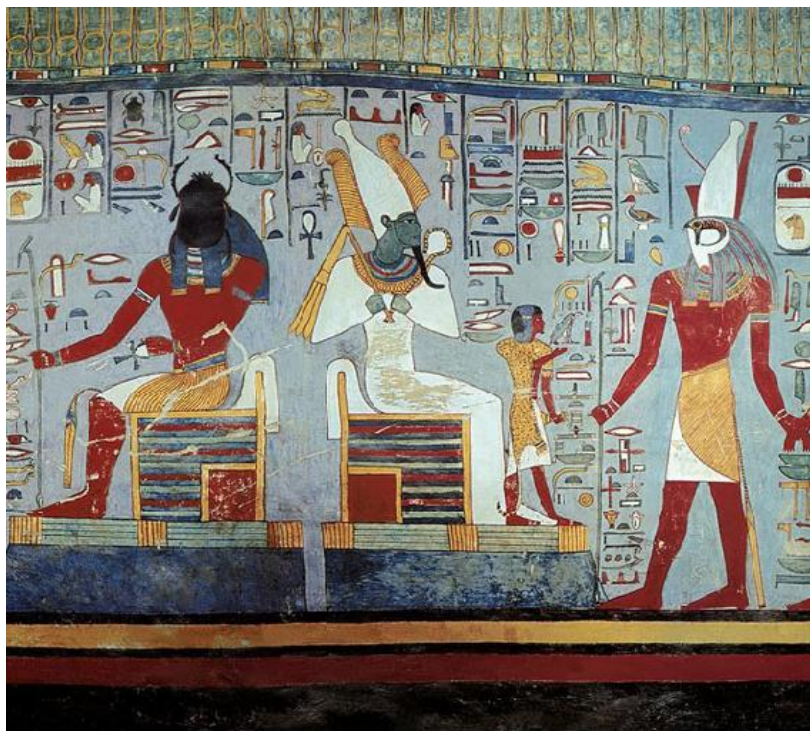
preserve their dead. It has been supposed that no other motive could have instigated such lavish excesses of money, time, and labour except the process of embalming, which readily required all these expenditures. Unfortunately, only a few profound theologians have properly researched the subject. It is now a popular belief that the Egyptians were so meticulous in embalming their dead and storing them in lasting stone repositories that their bodies were kept from decay. They believed that the departed souls would at some future time come back and revive their former bodies. Though this hypothesis was believed for many centuries it has proven to be false. Firstly, there is no evidence of this specific belief in reincarnation in written testimony or in circumstantial indication. The ancient Greek historian, Herodotus, tells us that "the Egyptians believed the soul, upon the dissolution of the body, always entered into some other animal being born, and, having passed in rotation through various terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial beings, again enters the body of a man who is being born." There is no proof that, at the end of the three thousand years occupied by this circuit, the soul will re enter its former body. The plain inference, on the contrary, is that it will be born in a new body, as at each preceding step in the series of its transmigrations. Secondly, the mutilation of the body in embalming forbids the belief in its restoration to life. The brain was extracted, and the skull stuffed with cotton. The entrails were removed, and sometimes, according to Porphyrios and Plutarch, thrown into the Nile. Sometimes, as modern examinations have revealed, the remains were bound up in four packages and either replaced in the cavity of the stomach or laid in four Canoptic jars beside the mummy. The theory of metempsychosis, that is universally acknowledged to have been held by the Egyptians, taught that souls at death, either immediately, or after a temporary sojourn in hell or heaven, struck the balance of their merits, were born in fresh bodies- never to return into their old ones. But this point is considered controversial because of the discovery of inscriptions, accompanying pictures of scenes illustrating the happiness of blessed souls in heaven, to this effect: "Their bodies shall repose in their tombs forever; they live in the celestial regions eternally, enjoying the presence of the Supreme God." "A people who believed in the transmigration of souls would naturally take extraordinary pains to preserve the body from putrefaction, in the hope of the soul again joining the body it had left." This remark is intrinsically untrue, because the doctrine of transmigration coexists in reconciled belief with the observed law of birth, infancy, and growth, not with the miracle of transition into reviving corpses. The notion is likewise historically refuted by the fact that the believers of that doctrine in the East have never preserved the body, but at once buried or burned it. The whole Egyptian theology is much more closely allied to the Hindu, which excluded, than to the Persian, which emphasised, the resurrection of the body.



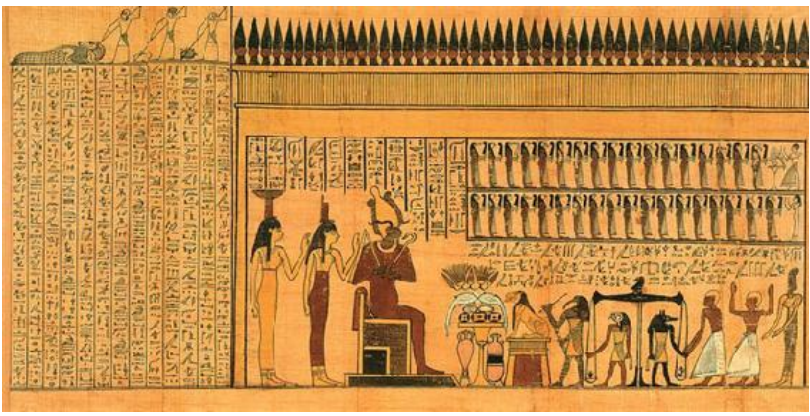
*Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Ani: Ani's Judgment:
Scene of the Hall of Judgment (sheet 3), c. 1250 BCE.
Thebes New Kingdom, 19th dynasty, 1320-1200 BCE.
Painted papyrus, 42 x 67 cm. The British Museum, London.*

Another theory that has been devised to explain the purpose of Egyptian embalming is that “it was to unite the soul permanently to its body, and keep the vital principle from perishing or transmigrating; the body and soul ran together through the journey of the dead and its dread ordeal.” This arbitrary guess was incredible. The preservation of the body does not appear in any way, even slightly, to detain or unite the soul with it; for the thought is unimaginable that it is the absence of the soul which constitutes death. Again, such an explanation of the motive for embalming cannot be correct, because in the hieroglyphic representations of the passage to the judgment, the separate soul is often depicted as hovering over the body, as kneeling before the judges, or as pursuing its adventures through the various realms of creation. Jean-François Champollion, a French classical scholar, philologist and orientalist, proclaimed:

When the body is represented, [I]t is as an aid to the spectator, and not as teaching a bodily resurrection. Sharpe's opinion that the picture of a bird poised over the mouth of a mummy, with the emblems of breath and life in its claws, that implied the doctrine of a general physical resurrection, was an inferential leap of the most startling character.



Funerary Chamber, Tomb of Ramses I, c. 1290 BCE.
19th dynasty, 1320-1200 BCE. Valley of the Kings, Luxor.



Book of the Dead, Papyrus of Horus: Judgment Scene: to the left of the scene sits Osiris, with the goddesses Isis and Nephthys standing behind him (sheet 6), c. 300 BCE. Ptolemaic dynasty, 332-31 BCE, Akhmim. Painted papyrus, 42.8 x 58 cm. The British Museum, London.



Statue of Osiris, late 6th century BCE.

End of the 26th dynasty, c. 685-525 BCE.

Schist, 89.5 x 28 x 46.5 cm.

The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

What proof is there that the symbol denotes this? Hundreds of paintings in the tombs show souls undergoing their respective allotments in the other world while their bodily mummies are quiet in the sepulchres of the present. In his treatise on “Isis and Osiris,” Plutarch wrote that “the Egyptians believe that while the bodies of eminent men are buried in the earth their souls are stars shining in heaven.” It is difficult in itself and unwarranted by evidence to imagine that, in the Egyptian faith, embalming either retained the soul in the

body or preserved the body for a future return of the soul. Who can believe that it was for either of those purposes that they embalmed the multitudes of animals whose mummies the explorer is still turning up? They preserved cats, hawks, bugs, crocodiles, monkeys, bulls, with as great pains as they did men. When the Canary Islands were first visited, it was found that their inhabitants had a custom of carefully embalming the dead. The same was the case among the Peruvians, whose vast cemeteries remain to this day crowded with mummies. But the expectation of a return of the souls into these preserved bodies is not to be ascribed to those peoples. Herodotus informed us that “the Ethiopians, having dried the bodies of their dead, coated them with white plaster, which they paint with colours to the likeness of the deceased and encase in a transparent substance. The dead, thus kept from being offensive, and yet plainly visible, are retained a whole year in the houses of their nearest relatives. Afterwards they are carried out and placed upright in the tombs around the city.” It has been argued that, because the Egyptians expended so much in preparing lasting tombs and in adorning their walls with varied embellishments, they must have thought the soul remained in the body, a conscious occupant of the dwelling place provided for it. It might as well be argued that, because the ancient savage tribes on the coast of South America, who obtained their support by fishing, buried fish hooks and bait with their dead, they thought that the dead bodies occupied themselves in their graves by fishing! The adornment of the tomb, so lavish and varied with the Egyptians, was a gratification of the spontaneous workings of love and affection, and needs no far fetched explanation. Every nation has its funeral customs and its rites of sepulchre, many of which would be as difficult to explain as those of Egypt. The Scandinavian sea king was sometimes buried, in his ship, in a grave dug on some headland overlooking the ocean. The Scythians buried their dead in rolls of gold, sometimes weighing forty or fifty solid pounds. Diodorus the Sicilian says:

The Egyptians, laying the embalmed bodies of their ancestors in noble monuments, see the true visages and expressions of those who died ages before them. So they take almost as great pleasure in viewing their bodily proportions and the lineaments of their faces as if they were still living among them.



Statue of Isis, late 6th century BCE.
End of the 26th dynasty, c. 685-525 BCE.
Schist, 90 x 20 x 45 cm. The Egyptian
National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

The tendency to memorialise deceased ancestors made them unwilling to part even with their lifeless bodies. The bodies thus prepared, we know from the testimony of ancient authors, were kept in the houses of their children or kindred, until a new generation removed them. Then nothing could be more natural than that the priesthood should take advantage of the custom, so associated with sacred sentiments, and throw theological sanctions over it, shroud it in mystery, and secure a monopoly of the power and profit arising

from it. It is not improbable, too, as has been suggested, that hygienic considerations in the form of political laws and priestly precepts, may at first have had an influence in establishing the habit of embalming, to prevent the probability of disease in such a climate.

There is great diversity of opinion among Egyptologists on this point. Some think that embalming was supposed to keep the soul in the body until after the funeral judgment and interment, but that, when the corpse was laid in its final receptacle, the ka (spirit of the deceased) proceeded to accompany the sun in its daily and nocturnal circuit, or to transmigrate through various animals and deities. However, others believed that the embalming process was utilised to protect the soul in the other world, exempt from transigrations, so long as the body was kept from decay. Perhaps the different notions on this subject attributed by modern authors to the Egyptians may all have prevailed among them at different times or among distinct sects. Evidently the desire to preserve the memory of the dead provided the foundation for the development of the theological doctrine- an elaborate system of sacerdotal dogmas that was deeply embedded into the structure of the nation.

The second question that arises is: what was the significance of the funeral ceremonies celebrated by the Egyptians over their dead? When the body had been embalmed, it was presented before a tribunal of forty two judges sitting in state on the eastern borders of the lake Acherusia. They made strict inquiry into the conduct and character of the deceased. Anyone might make complaint against him, or testify in his behalf. If it was found that he had been wicked, had died in debt, or was otherwise unworthy, he was deprived of an honourable burial and subsequently discarded into the ditch of Tartar. However if the individual was benevolent and found to have led an upright life, the honours of a regular interment were decreed him. The cemetery, a large plain surrounded with trees and lined with canals lay on the western side of the lake, called Elisout (meaning rest). It was reached by a boat, the funeral barge, in which no-one could cross without an order from the judges and the payment of a small fee. In these and other particulars, some of the scenes supposed to be awaiting the soul in the other world were dramatically shadowed forth. Each rite correlated with the conception of the Egyptian afterlife. What the priests performed over the body in the burial rituals reiterated what thejudicial deities would hypothetically perform over the soul in Amenthe. The Ancient Greeks were very much influenced by the Egyptian ideology of the afterlife, and modelled many of their notions concerning the fate and state of the dead from Egypt. Hades corresponds with Amenthe; Pluto, with the subterranean Osiris; Mercury Psychopomps, with Anubis, "the usher of souls;" Aacus, Minos, and Rhadamanthos, with the three assistant gods who help in weighing the soul and present the result to Osiris; Tartarus, to the Egyptian ditch Tartar; Charon's ghost boat over the Styx, to the barge transporting the mummy to the tomb; Cerberus, to Oms; Acheron, to Acherusia; the Elysian Fields, to Elisout. Herodotus positively affirms that

they were derived from Egypt, and the Ancient Greek system is merely too similar to have been developed independently.



Stela of Djedjehutyiuankh. Ancient Egyptian,
22nd dynasty, c. 945-720 BCE. Wood covered
with stucco and painted, 27.6 x 23 x 2.7 cm.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



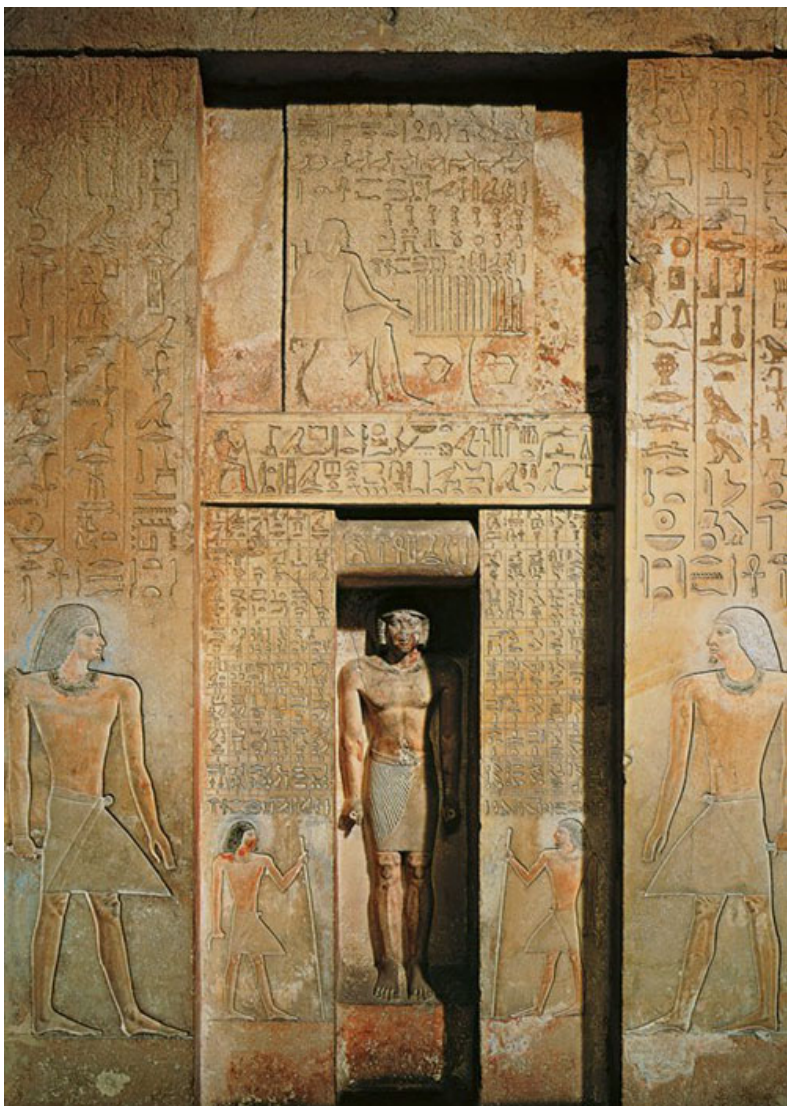
Funerary Stela of Amenemhat.

Ancient Thebes, 11th dynasty, 2134-1991 BCE.

Tanis, Tomb of Psusennes I. Excavation by

P. Montet. Painted limestone, 30 x 50 cm.

The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



False Door Stela of Iteti, c. 2181 BCE.
Ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom, 6th dynasty, 2345-2181 BCE.
Saqqara (Tomb of Iteti). Painted limestone, 360x 210 cm.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



Triad of Menkaure. Ancient Egyptian Old Kingdom, 4th dynasty, 2620 –2480 BCE, reign of Menkaure, 2490–2472 BCE, Giza. Greywacke, height: 96 cm. The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

The triumphs of modern investigation into the antiquities of Egypt, unlocking the hieroglyphics and revealing age old secrets, have unveiled to us a comprehensive view of the Egyptian doctrine of the future life. Three sources of knowledge have been laid open to us. The first was the papyrus rolls, one of which was placed in the bosom of every mummy. Covered with hieroglyphics, these rolls were called the funeral ritual, or book of the dead. It served through the burial rites. It contained the names of the deceased and his

parents, a series of prayers the individual was to recite before the various divinities he would meet on his journey, and representations of some of the pursuits that waited in the unseen state. Secondly, the ornamental cases in which the mummies are enclosed are covered with scenes depicting eternal life, outlining the realities and events to which the soul of the dead occupant will experience in the other life. Finally the various fates of souls are sculpted and painted on the walls in the tombs, in characters which were deciphered during the 19th century.

Combining the information thus obtained, we learn that, according to the Egyptian representation, the soul is led by the god Thoth into Duat, the infernal underworld, the entrance to which lies in the extreme west, on the farther side of the sea, where the sun sets under the earth. The soul next kneels before the forty-five judges of Osiris, and the final trial is performed in the 'Hall of the Two Truths'. Here the three divinities Horus, Anubis, and Thoth proceed to weigh the soul on the scales of Maat (both a personification and standard of justice and truth). The heart-shaped vase symbolising the worth of the deceased is balanced against the feather of Maat. If the 'heart' balances with the feather of Maat, the soul is rewarded with eternal life. If the 'heart' fails this test and the scale dips, the heart is consumed by a horrendous beast named Ammit.

Thoth, the scribe of the gods, records the result on a tablet, and the soul of the deceased advances to the foot of the throne where Osiris (god of the dead and king of the underworld) proclaims the final sentence. As numerous drawings seem to suggest the condemned soul is either sent back to the earth straightway, to live again in the form of a vile animal or thrown into the tortures of a horrid hell of fire and devils below, or driven into the atmosphere, to be vexed and tossed by tempests, violently whirled in blasts and clouds, till its sins are expiated, and another probation granted through a renewed existence in human form.

We have two accounts of the Egyptian divisions of the universe. According to the first view, they conceived creation to consist of three different steps. First came the earth, or zone of trial, where men live on probation. Next was the atmosphere, or zone of temporal punishment, where souls are afflicted for their sins. The ruler of this ethereal state of existence was the god Pooh, the overseer of souls in penance. Such a notion is referenced in some of the later Greek philosophers, and in the writings of the Alexandrian Jews, who undoubtedly were inspired by the creation theories of Egypt. In addition, the Apostle Paul speaks of "the prince of the power of the air." Shakspeare also alludes to this idea in his play *Measure for Measure* when Claudio shrinks from the verge of death with horror, lest his soul should, through ages, "Be imprison'd in the viewless winds, / And blown with restless violence round about / The pendent world." (Act III, lines 122-124). After their purgation in this region, all the souls live again on earth by transmigration. The third realm was in the serene blue sky among the stars,

the zone of blessedness, where the accepted dwell in immortal peace and joy. Eusebius says, "The Egyptians represented the universe by two circles, one within the other, and a serpent with the head of a hawk twining his folds around them," thus forming three spheres, the earth, the atmosphere and a celestial heaven.



Sarcophagus of Pakhar in the Cachette of Deir el-Bahar.

Ancient Thebes, 21st dynasty, 1077-943 BCE,
reign of Psusennes I/Amenemope, c. 1047-992 BCE,
Bab el-Gasus. Painted wood. 189 x 59 cm.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



Canopic Jars of Psusennes I. Lower Empire, 21st dynasty,
1077-943 BCE, reign of Psusennes I, 1045-944 BCE.
Alabaster, gold leaf and bronze, length: 38 and 43 cm.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

But the representation most frequently depicted creation simply as having the earth in the centre, and the sun with its attendants circulating around it in the brightness of the superior, and the darkness of the infernal, sphere. Souls at death pass down through the west into the underworld, and are tried. If condemned, they are either sent back to the earth, or confined in the underworld for punishment. If justified, they join the blissful company of the Sun God, and rise with him through the east to journey along his celestial

course. The upper hemisphere is divided into twelve equal parts, corresponding with the twelve hours of the day. At the gate of each of these golden segments a sentinel god is stationed, to whom the newly arriving soul must pass through to continue its journey. Similarly the lower hemisphere is divided into the same number of dismal sections, corresponding with the twelve hours of the night. Each day, the chief divinity, in robes of light, traverses the beaming zones of the blessed, where they hunt and fish, or plough and sow, reap and gather, in the Fields of the Sun on the banks of the heavenly Nile. Nightly, dressed in deep black from head to foot, the soul traverses the desolate zones of the damned, where it undergoes appropriate retributions. Thus the future destiny of man was sublimely associated with the path of the sun through the upper and lower hemispheres. Astronomy was an imperative component of Ancient Egyptian theology. The stars were interpreted figuratively as spirits and pure genii, and the great planets were represented as deities. The calendar was a religious chart, each month, week, day, hour, being the special charge and stand point of a god.

There was much poetic beauty and ethical power in these doctrines and symbols. The necessity of virtue, the dread ordeals of the grave, the certainty of retribution, the mystic circuits of transmigration, a glorious immortality, the paths of planets and gods and souls through creation, all were impressively enounced, dramatically shown.

*The Egyptian soul sail'd o'er the skyey sea
In ark of crystal, mann'd by beamy gods,
To drag the deeps of space and net the stars,
Where, in their nebulous shoals, they shore the void,
And through old Night's Typhonian blindness shine.
Then, solarised, he press'd towards the sun,
And, in the heavenly Hades, hall of God,
Had final welcome of the firmament.*



Second Gilded Sarcophagus of Tutankhamun. Ancient Egyptian New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, 1549-1298 BCE, reign of Tutankhamun, 1333-1323 BCE. Gilded wood, semi-precious stones and glass paste, 204 x 78.5 x 68 cm. The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.

This solemn linking of the fate of man with the astronomic universe, a splendid amalgamation of the deepest moral doctrines with the most majestic of physical sciences explains several of the superstitions embedded within Egyptian mythology and religion. The location of the underworld epitomises this idea. Some Egyptians believed, travelling westwards, at twilight, on the great marshes haunted by flocks of greyish- white ibises, solemn, lethargic, ghostlike birds, and interpreted them as the embodiment of drifting souls waiting for the funeral rites to be paid so they could continue to their destined abode.

The Egyptian doctrine of future life with all of its complexity and splendour was an incredibly powerful system of beliefs. Parts of it were publicly enacted on festival days by multitudes numbering more than a hundred thousand. Evidently most of the information we know surrounding their belief systems is illustrated in their temples and pyramids, astonishing structures that only unrivalled learning, skill, wealth, and power could contrive. The powerful nature of the civilisation commanded the allegiance and imagination of its people. This was the force that built the pyramids and enshrined whole generations of Egypt's embalmed population in richly adorned sepulchres of everlasting rock. Its grasp of esoteric knowledge and faith illustrated by its exoteric exhibition, helped the Ancient Egyptian civilisation achieve enduring success. In the vortex of change and decay it sank at last and it wasn't until the late 19th century that mass excavations began to uncover these astounding relics. These discoveries helped define the theories we now have on the Egyptian afterlife, revealing the doctrines originally contained in the altar lore of those priestly schools which once dotted the plains of the Delta and studded the banks of eldest Nile, where now, disfigured and gigantic, the solemn "Old Sphinxes lift their countenances bland Athwart the river sea and sea of sand."



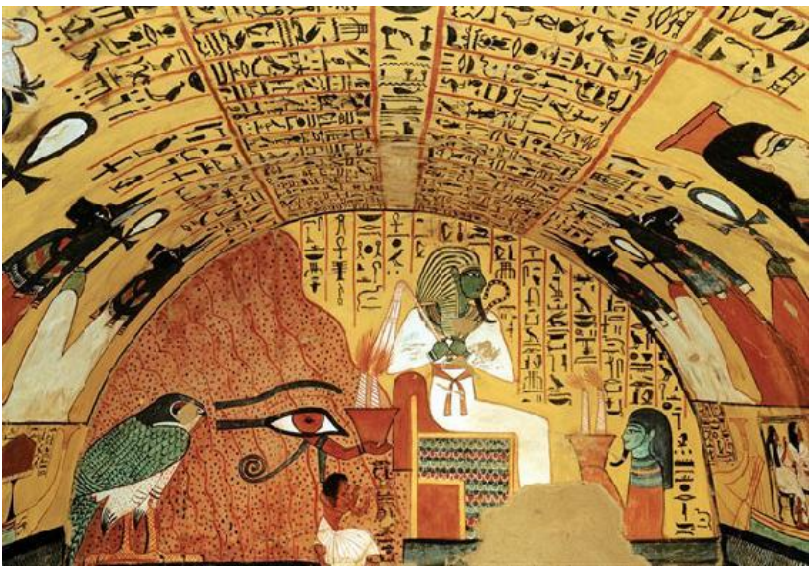
Necklace of Princess Sathathor with Pectoral Bearing the Name of Senusret II. Middle Kingdom, 12th dynasty, 1991-1802 BCE, reign of Senusret III, 1878-1839 BCE, Dahshur, Funerary Complex of Senusret III, Tomb of Princess Sathathor. Gold, carnelian, turquoise, lapis lazuli, length: 4.9 cm. The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



Canopic Jar, c. 1340–1336 BCE. 18th dynasty,
1549–1298 BCE, reign of Akhenaten, c. 1350–1334 BCE.
Valley of the Kings, Luxor. Alabaster with glass
and stone inlays height: 52.1 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Panel from the Back of Tutankhamun's Golden Throne (detail), 1323 BCE.
New Kingdom, 18th dynasty, 1549-1298 BCE, reign of Tutankhamun,
1333-1323 BCE. Wood, carnelian, glass, faience, silver, gold, stucco.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.



Pashedu's Tomb (TT3), the rear wall of the innermost burial chamber with the god Osiris on his throne and the mountain of the West behind him.
Ancient Egyptian, 19th dynasty, c. 1298-1187 BCE. Fresco.
Deir el-Medina, Theban Necropolis, near Luxor.



Block Statue and Niche Stela of Sahathor. Ancient Egyptian Middle Kingdom, 12th dynasty, 1991-1802 BCE, reign of Amenemhat II, c. 1922-1878 BCE, Abydos. Limestone, traces of paint, stela: 112 x 63.8 x 18 cm; statue: 41.5 cm. The British Museum, London.

He Cometh Forth into the Day

*I am here, I have traversed the Tomb,
I behold thee, Thou who art strong!
I have passed through the Underworld, gazed on
Osiris,
Scattered the night.
I have come, I have gazed on my Father, Osiris,*

*I am his son.
I am the son who loveth his Father,
I am beloved.
I have made me a path through the western horizon,
Even as God.*

– Hymn from The Egyptian Book of the Dead



*Bust of Ramses II (detail), 19th dynasty 1298-1187 BCE,
reign of Ramses II, 1279-1212 BCE. Granite, 80 x 70 cm.
The Egyptian National Museum of Cairo, Cairo.*

Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

*I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.*

*And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."*



*Cinerary urn in shape of Mater Matuta, c. 430 BCE,
Pedata Necropolis, Chianciano.
Terracotta. Museo Archeologico Florence.*

The Etruscans

Although the majority of written archives of Etruria perished thousands of years ago, the excavation of Etruscan remains has provided insight into their religion and their understanding of death and future life. With the help of sepulchres, tombs and other archaeological evidence, historians can follow the

ancient Etruscans from the cradle to the tomb, perceiving their various national costumes, peculiar physiognomies, names and relationships, houses, furniture, ranks, avocations, games, dying scenes, burial processions, and funeral festivals, and the afterlife. They carved their tombs in the living rock of cliffs and hills, or constructed them with massive masonry. They painted or carved the walls with descriptive and symbolic scenes, and crowded their interiors with sarcophagi, cinerary urns, vases, goblets, mirrors, and a thousand other articles covered with paintings and sculptures rich in information of their authors. Examining these artefacts, which were unearthed in the 19th century in immense quantities, has built our entire understanding of this civilisation. Evidently, when the whole scene of life has passed away, a sepulchral world survives and opens itself to reveal the past and instruct the future!

The Etruscans were accustomed to burying their deceased outside their walls; and sometimes the city of the living was thus surrounded by a far reaching city of the dead. Whole acres of these stone cut sepulchres were found beneath the hills. The houses of the dead were built to imitate the houses of the living, only on a smaller scale; and the interior arrangements were so closely copied that it believed that they emulated the sound and motion of life. The images painted or etched on the urns and sarcophagi that fill the sepulchres were often portraits of the deceased, varying with age, sex, features, and expression. These personal portraits were intended to memorialise the dead. For, as we wander through those sepulchres now, thousands of faces thus preserved look down upon us with a mute plea, when every vestige of their names and characters is forever lost, and their very dust scattered long ago.

Along the sides of the burial chamber were massive stone shelves, or sometimes benches or tables, upon which the dead were laid in a reclining posture, to prepare themselves for the afterlife. Helmets, breastplates, greaves, signet rings, and weapons, a variety of jewellery and other ornaments were discovered buried near the bodies with the tombs; for females, the necklace, ear rings, bracelet, and other ornaments, each in its relative place, when the body they once encased or adorned has not left a single fragment behind. An antiquary once, digging for discoveries, chanced to break through the ceiling of a tomb. He looked in; and there, to quote his own words:

I beheld a warrior stretched on a couch of rock, and in a few minutes I saw him vanish under my eyes; for, as the air entered the cemetery, the armour, thoroughly oxidised, crumbled away into most minute particles, and in a short time scarcely a trace of what I had seen was left on the couch. It is impossible to express the effect this sight produced upon me.

Relics of the Dead

A peculiarly Etruscan type of vase which deserves some separate attention is that known as the Canopic jar, resembling the so-called Kavamroi, in which the Egyptians placed the bowels of their mummies. These Etruscan canopi are often representations of the human figure, the heads, which are often attired in Egyptian fashion, form the lid of the jar. The eyes are sometimes inlaid, and the female heads have large movable earrings and other adornments. In the tombs it was customary to place these vases on round chairs of wood, bronze, or terracotta. A prime example of this is the *Human-headed Cinerary Urn* which was found in the tombs at Chiusi. Historians have traced the origin of the Canopic jars to the funerary masks placed over the faces of the dead, which are sometimes found in the earliest Etruscan tombs. This practice may have been derived from Mycenae, where archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann found gold masks in the shaft-tombs of the Agora. However, in Etruria the examples are either in bronze or terracotta. The gradual transition can be observed from the mask, at first placed over the corpse, then attached to the corpse, and finally covering the urn containing its ashes. Initially, only a head was used to adorn the jar, however, eventually the human head evolved into reclining effigies on the covers of the sarcophagi (1, 2, 3, 4). While the Etruscans did not practice embalming to the same extent as the Egyptians, the method of placing the mortal remains of a person within a representation of the individual itself probably was similar to the sarcophagi of Ancient Egypt. The following are detailed descriptions of some of the Etruscan sarcophagi found within the tombs.

The *Sarcophagus of the Spouses from Cerveteri*, an exceptional monument, is a sarcophagus or cinerary urn from Caere, a city famous during the Archaic period for its clay sculpture. During this epoch, terracotta was one of the preferred materials in the sculpture workshops in this region and was used to make funerary monuments and architectural decorations. The ductility of the clay offered these artisans numerous possibilities, compensating for the lack of stone suitable in southern Etruria.

This particular monument was found in 1861 by Napoleon III and is often regarded as a sarcophagus because of its exceptional dimensions. It features the two deceased tenderly entwined, reclining on a bed in accordance with the style that originated in Asia Minor. They are making the ritual gesture of offering perfume that, along with the sharing of wine, was part of traditional funeral ceremony. The casket and lid are decorated with bright paintwork, now partially disappeared, that adds to the elegance of the ornaments as well as the details in the fabric and the hair. The style of this particular sculpture shows strong influence from Eastern Greece, particularly from the Ionians, which can be seen from the smiling faces and full forms of the two figures, but there are also very prominent Etruscan features such as the lack of formal coherence, the way the legs received less sculptural volume and the emphasis on the gestures of the deceased.

The *Sarcophagus of Larthia Seianti* is dated around 175-150 BCE due to

coins found with it from the same period. The figure of the lady was cast in two halves, the joint being below the hips; she is represented as a middle-aged matron, her head veiled in a mantle which she draws aside with her right hand. In her left hand she holds a mirror in an open case. On the right arm are bracelets, and on the left hand six rings, the bezels of which are painted purple to imitate sard stones; in her ears are pendants painted to imitate amber set in gold. The nude parts are painted flesh-colour, and colouring is freely employed throughout, the cushions being painted in stripes. This sculpture has no reliefs on the front, but is ornamented with pilasters, triglyphs and quatrefoils.



Human-headed cinerary urn, 675-650 BCE.
Etruscan. Terracotta, height: 64.8 cm.
Museo Etrusco, Chiusi.

Etruscan Doctrine of Death and the Afterlife

It must be supposed that the Etruscan conceived of a judgment after death in the form of a system of rewards and punishments. However the Etruscan representations in the tombs give no clear evidence of any judicial process, containing nothing analogous to the Osiris trial, the weighing of the soul, the sentence, and the award accordingly, which are so prevalent on the

monuments of Egypt. An important element in the religion of Etruria was the doctrine of Genii, a system of household deities or guardian spirits who watched over the fortunes of individuals and families, and who are continually shown on the engravings in the sepulchres as guiding, or actively interested in, all the incidents that happen to those under their care. It was supposed that every person had two genii allotted to him, one inciting him to good deeds, the other to bad, and both accompanying him after death to help determine the fate of the deceased. Good and evil spirits compete for the possession of souls in the underworld; the bad genii pursue some, and threaten them or torment them; good genii protect others and save them from the dark demons who attempt to drag them to the place of punishment. The genii or spirits often had distinctive identities and were depicted in Etruscan tombs. One of the most clearly marked of these is Vanth, or Death, who appears in several of the sepulchral scenes, either standing by the door of an open tomb, or prompting the slaughter of a prisoner, or otherwise encouraging carnage and destruction. Another is Kulmu, "god of the tomb," who bears the fatal shears in one hand and a funeral torch in the other, and opens the door of the sepulchre in order receive into it a fresh inmate. A third being of the same class is Nathuns, a sort of male fury, represented with tusk-like fangs and hair standing on end, while in either hand he grasps a serpent by the middle, which he shakes over avengers, in order to excite them to the highest pitch of frenzy. This belief, sincerely held, would obviously exert a powerful influence over their feelings in the conduct of life.



Sarcophagus of Larthia Seianti, 180-170 BCE.
Etruscan. Marcianella Necropolis, Chiusi. Terracotta,
183 x 61 x 43 cm. Museo Archeologico, Florence.



Sarcophagus of Laris Pulena from Monterozzi,
early 2nd century BCE. Nenfro stone, length: 201.17 cm.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Tarquinia.



Sarcophagus of the Spouses from Cerveteri, c. 520-510 BCE,
Etruscan, Necropolis of Banditaccia, Cerveteri.
Polychrome terracotta, clay, slip, paint,
111 x 69 x 194 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

The doctrine concerning the gods that prevailed in this ancient nation was interpreted from classic writings in addition to sepulchral monumental remains, thus similar to Ancient Egypt and Ancient Rome. Similar to these civilisations, a multitude of deities were worshipped, each having a particular role, form of representation and cycle of traditions. The goddess of 'Fate' was pictured with wings emphasising her swift nature and ability to attack unexpectedly. In addition, she was depicted clasping a hammer and nail in order to illustrate that her decrees were unalterably fixed. The name of the supreme god was Tinia. He was the central power of the world of divinities, and was always represented, like Jupiter Tonans, with a thunderbolt in his hand. There were twelve 'consenting gods,' composing the council of Tinia, called 'The Senators of Heaven.' While they dwelled in the deepest recesses of heaven, they were not deemed eternal and were supposed to rise and fall together. There was another class, called 'The Shrouded Gods,' which were more powerful yet never revealed themselves to humans and therefore were viewed as enigmatic and incredibly mysterious. But it was to the unseen world beneath the earth, the place to which men went after death, and where the souls of their ancestors resided, that the Etruscans devoted the chief portion of their religious thought; and with this were connected the bulk of their religious observances. Last, but most feared and most prominent in the Etruscan mind, were the rulers of the lower regions, Mantus and Mania, the king and queen of the underworld. Mantus was figured as an old man, wearing

a crown, with wings at his shoulders, a torch reversed in his hand and sometimes two to three large nails. Mania was a fearful personification, frequently associated with the act of human sacrifice. Roman philosopher Macrobius expressed that young boys were offered up at her annual festival for a long time, until the heads of onions and poppies were eventually substituted. Intimately connected with these deities, their prime minister and most active agent, cruel, hideous, half human, half animal, the chief figure in almost all the representations of the lower world, is the demon, Charun, in name undoubtedly identical with the Stygian ferryman of the Greeks, but in character vastly different. Charun is generally represented as a squalid and hideous old man with flaming eyes and savage aspect; yet he also has the ears, and tusks of a brute. He also is often depicted with wings, dark features and complexion thus resembling the modern conception of the devil. His brow is sometimes bound by snakes; at other times he has a snake twisted round his arm; and he bears in his hands almost universally a huge mallet or hammer, upraised, as if he were about to deal a death-stroke. When death is being inflicted by man, he stands by, "grinning with savage delight;" if when it comes naturally, he is almost as well pleased; he holds the horse on which the departed soul is to take its journey to the other world, commands the soul to mount, leads them into the grim kingdom of the dead. In that kingdom he is one of the tormentors of guilty souls, whom he strikes with his mallet or with a sword, while they kneel before him and beg for mercy. Various attendant demons and furies, some male, some female, seem to act under his orders, and inflict such tortures as he is pleased to prescribe.

As illustrated by the contents of the tombs, it can be inferred that the belief in a future existence was a key component in the daily life of the Ancient Etruscans. The sheer amount of preserved paintings, tracings, and etchings indicate their preoccupation with the afterlife. The symbolic representations connected with this subject may be arranged in several classes. First, there is an innumerable variety of deathbed scenes, many of which can be described as vivid and dramatic in character. Funeral processions on the tomb walls depict patriarchs dying surrounded by people grieving and friends of the deceased waving farewell to their weeping loved ones. In addition to illustrations of funerary scenes, various emblems of the soul's passage into the underworld are also pictured on the tomb walls. There are various symbols of this mysterious transition: one is a snake with a boy riding upon its back, its amphibious nature plainly typifying the twofold existence allotted to man. The soul is also often shown dressed in travelling attire seated upon a horse and followed by a slave carrying a large sack of provisions. Perhaps this symbolises the arduous nature of the journey. Horses are depicted harnessed to carts in which disembodied spirits are seated, waiting to be led to their doom. Sometimes the soul is portrayed being tormented by Charun, the atrocious death king. Whole companies of souls are also depicted marching forth in procession, under the guidance of a winged genius, to their

subterranean abode.

Finally, there is a class of representations depicting the ultimate fate of souls after judgment has been passed. Some are shown seated at banquet, in full enjoyment, according to their ideas of bliss. Some are shown undergoing punishment, beaten with hammers, stabbed and torn by black demons. There is no proof that the Etruscans believed in the translation of any soul to the abode of the gods above the sky, no signs of any path rising to the supernal heaven; but they clearly expected just discriminations to be made in the under world. Into that realm many gates are shown leading, some of them peaceful, inviting, surrounded by apparent emblems of deliverance, rest, and blessedness; others yawning, terrific, engirt by the heads of gnashing beasts and furies threatening their victim.



Tomb of the Diver (detail of the long wall), 500-470 BCE,
Necropolis near Paestum. Fresco on limestone,
tomb: 215 x 100 x 80 cm. Museo Archeologico
Nazionale di Paestum, Paestum.



Grave Gods, 7th century BCE, Fontecucchiaia (Chiusi).
Earthenware and bronze (tools). Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen.



Child's Tomb Group, eleven miniature objects, c. 4th century BCE.

Apulian, earthenware and bronze (mirror).

The Newark Art Museum, Newark. Apulian.

In their worship the Etruscan sought, first of all and especially, to know the will of the gods, which they believed to be signified to man in three principal ways. These were thunder and lightning, which they ascribed to the direct action of the heavenly powers; the flight of birds, which they supposed to be subject to divine guidance; and certain appearances in the entrails of victims offered in sacrifice, which they also regarded as supernaturally induced or influenced. To interpret these indications of the divine will, it was necessary to have a class of persons trained in the traditional knowledge of the signs in question, and skilled to give a right explanation of them to all inquirers. Hence the position of the priesthood in Etruria, which was “an all-dominant hierarchy, maintaining its sway by an arrogant exclusive claim to intimate acquaintance with the will of heaven, and the decrees of fate.” The Etruscan priests were not, like the Egyptian, the teachers of the people, the inculcators of a high morality, or the expounders of esoteric doctrines on the subjects of man’s relation to God, his true aim in life, and his ultimate destiny; they were soothsayers, who sought to expound the future, immediate or remote, to warn men against coming dangers, to suggest modes of averting divine anger, and thus to save men from evil which would otherwise have come upon them unawares and ruined or, at any rate, greatly injured them. Men were taught to observe the signs in the sky, and the appearance and flight of birds, the sounds which they uttered, their position at the time, and various other particulars; they were bidden to note whatever came in their way that seemed to them unusual or abnormal, and to report all to the priests, who thereupon pronounced what the signs observed portended, and either announced an inevitable doom, or prescribed a mode whereby the doom might be postponed or averted. Sometimes the signs reported were declared to affect merely individuals; but frequently the word went forth that danger was portended to the state; and then it was for the priesthood to determine at once the nature and extent of the danger, and also the measures to be adopted under the

circumstances. Sacrifices on a vast scale or of an unusual character were commonly commanded in such cases, even human victims being occasionally offered to the infernal deities, Mantus and Mania, whose wrath it was impossible to appease in any less fearful way. Certain books in the possession of the hierarchy ascribed to a half-divine, half-human personage, named Tages, and handed down from a remote antiquity, contained the system of divination which the priests followed, and guided them in their expositions and requirements.

Among sacrificial animals were included the bull, the ass, and perhaps the wolf, though this is disputed. The victim, brought by an individual citizen, was always offered by a priest, and libations usually accompanied the sacrifice. Unbloody offerings were also not infrequently presented, and were burnt upon the altar, like the victims.



*Burial Goods from Tomb 179, c. 9th century BCE,
Poggio Selciatello. Impasto pottery.
Museo Archeologico, Florence.*

A general survey of Etruscan remains has convinced the most recent inquirers that the public worship of the gods in the temples, which were to be found in all Etruscan cities, by sacrifice, libation, and adoration, played but a very small part in the religious life of the nation. "The true temples of the Etruscans," it has been observed, "were their tombs." Practically, the real objects of their worship were the Lares, or spirits of their ancestors. Each house probably had its *lararium*, where the master of the household offered prayer and worship every morning, and sacrifice occasionally! And each family certainly had its family tomb, constructed on the model of a house, in which the spirits of its ancestors were regarded as residing. "The tombs themselves," we are told, "are exact imitations of the house." There is usually an outer vestibule, apparently appropriated to the annual funeral feast: from this a passage leads to a large central chamber, which is lighted by windows cut through the rock. The central hall is surrounded by smaller chambers, in which the dead repose. On the roof we see carved in stone the broad beam, or roof-tree, with rafters imitated, in relief on either side, and even imitations of the tiles. These chambers contain the corpses, and are furnished with all the implements, ornaments, and utensils used in life. The tombs are, in fact, places for the dead to live in. The position and surroundings of the deceased are made to approximate as closely as possible to the conditions of life. The couches on which the corpses repose have a triclinial arrangement, and are furnished with cushions carved in stone; and imitations of easy-chairs and

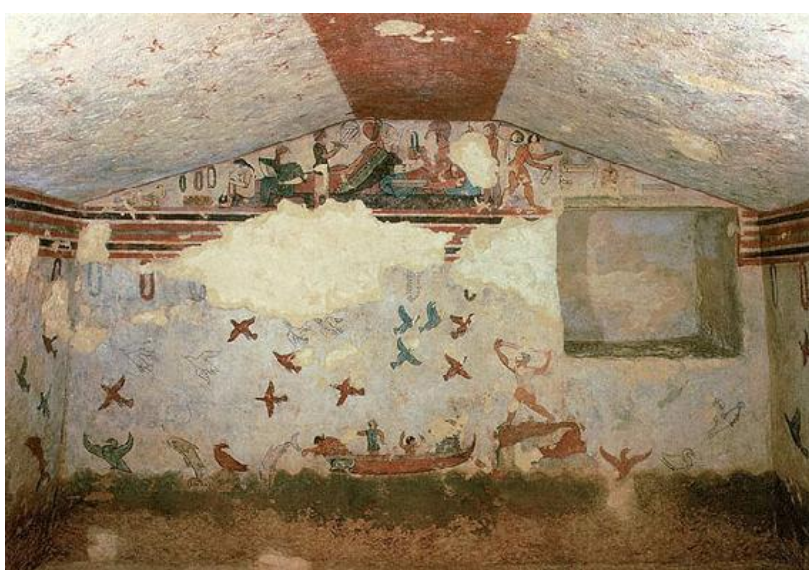
footstools are carefully hewn out of the rock. Everything, in short, is arranged as if the dead were reclining at a banquet in their accustomed dwellings. On the floor stand wine-jars ; and the most precious belongings of the deceased—arms, ornaments, and mirrors —hang from the roof, or are suspended on the walls. The walls themselves are richly decorated, usually being painted with representations of festive scenes; we see figures in gaily-embroidered garments reclining on couches, while attendants replenish the goblets, or beat time to the music of the pipers. Nothing is omitted which can conduce to the amusement or comfort of the deceased. Their spirits were evidently believed to inhabit those house-tombs after death, in the same ways that they inhabited their houses.

The tombs were not permanently closed. Once a year at least, perhaps more, it was customary for the surviving relatives to visit the resting-place of their departed dear ones, to carry them offerings as tokens of affectionate regard, and solicit their favour and protection. The presents brought included portrait-statues, cups, dishes, lamps, armour, vases, mirrors, gems, seals, and jewellery. Inscriptions frequently accompanied the offerings; and these show that the gifts were made, not to the spirit of the tomb, or to the infernal gods, or to any other deities, but to the persons whose remains were deposited in the sepulchres. Their spirits were no doubt regarded as conciliated by the presents; and practically, it is probable that far more value was attached to the fostering care of these nearly allied protectors than to the favour of the awful gods of earth and heaven, who were distant beings, dimly apprehended, and chiefly known as wielders of thunderbolts.



Cinerary Statue of Recumbent Young Man,
c. 4th century BCE, Perugia. Bronze,
length of stand: 69 cm, height of figure: 42 cm.
The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

As a whole, the Etruscan religion must be pronounced one of the least elevating of the forms of ancient belief. It presented the gods mainly under a severe and forbidding aspect, as beings to be dreaded and propitiated, rather than loved and worshipped. It encouraged a superstitious regard for omens and portents, which filled the mind with foolish alarms, and distracted men from the performance of the duties of every-day life. It fostered the pride and vanity of the priestly class by attributing to them superhuman wisdom, and something like infallibility, while it demoralised the people by forcing them to cringe before a selfish and arrogant hierarchy. If it diminished the natural tendency of men to overvalue the affairs of this transitory life, by placing prominently before them the certainty and importance of the life beyond the grave, yet its influence was debasing rather than elevating, from the coarseness of the representations which it gave alike of the happiness and misery of the future state. Where the idea entertained of the good man's final bliss makes it consist in feasting and carousing, and the suffering of the lost arises from the blows and wounds inflicted by demons, the doctrine of future rewards and punishment loses much of its natural force, and is more likely to vitiate than to improve the moral character. The accounts which we have of the morality of the Etruscans are far from favourable; and it may be questioned whether the vices whereto they were prone did not receive a stimulus, rather than a check, from their religion.

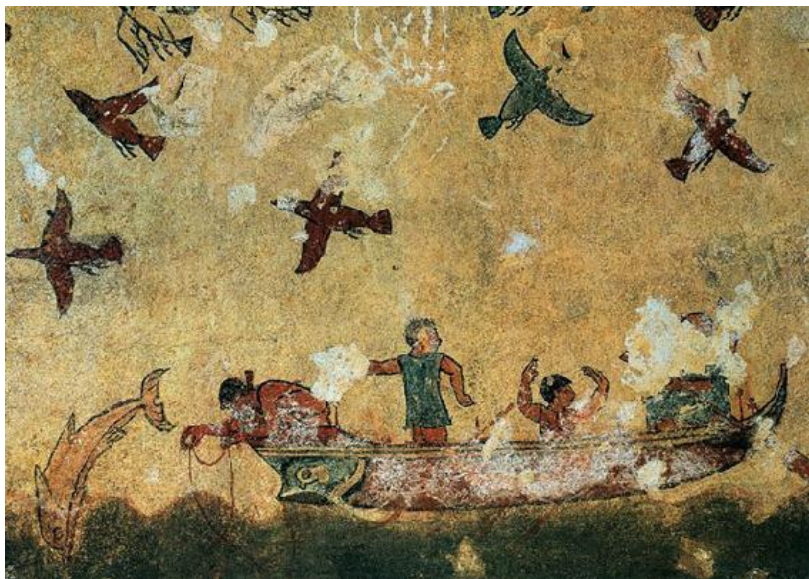


*Tomb of the Hunting and Fishing, c. 6th century BCE.
Etruscan. Rock-cut tomb with wall paintings. Tarquinia.*

Excerpt from **Etruscan Places** by D. H. Lawrence

The lamp begins to shine and smell, then to shine without smelling: the guide opens the iron gate, and we descend the steep steps down into the tomb. It seems a dark little hole underground: a dark little hole, after the sun of the upper world! But the guide's lamp begins to flare up, and we find ourselves in a little chamber in the rock, just a small, bare little cell of a room that some anchorite might have lived in. It is so small and bare and familiar, quite unlike the rather splendid spacious tombs at Cerveteri. But the lamp flares bright, we get used to the change of light, and see the paintings on the little walls. It is the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, so called from the pictures on the walls, and it is supposed to date from the sixth century B.C. It is very badly damaged, pieces of the wall have fallen away, damp has eaten into the colours, nothing seems to be left. Yet in the dimness we perceive flights of birds flying through the haze, with the draught of life still in their wings. And as we take heart and look closer we see the little room is frescoed all round with hazy sky and sea, with birds flying and fishes leaping, and little men hunting, fishing, rowing in boats. The lower part of the wall is all a blue-green of sea with a silhouette surface that ripples all round the room. From the sea rises a tall rock, off which a naked man, shadowy but still distinct, is beautifully and cleanly diving into the sea, while a companion climbs up the rock after him, and on the water a boat waits with rested oars in it, three men watching the diver, the middle man standing up

naked, holding out his arms. Meanwhile a great dolphin leaps behind the boat, a flight of birds soars upwards to pass the rock, in the clear air. Above all, from the bands of colour that border the wall at the top hang the regular loops of garlands, flowers and leaves and buds and berries, garlands which belong to maidens and to women, and which represent the flowery circle of the female life and sex. The top border of the wall is formed of horizontal stripes or ribands of colour that go all round the room, red and black and dull gold and blue and prim rose, and these are the colours that occur invariably. Men are nearly always painted a darkish red, which is the colour of many Italians when they go naked in the sun, as the Etruscans went. Women are coloured paler, because women did not go naked in the sun.



Tomb of the Hunting and Fishing, rear wall of the second chamber (wall painting detail), c. 6th century BCE.
Rock-cut tomb with wall paintings. Tarquinia.

Excerpt from **Etruscan Places** by D. H. Lawrence

They are surprisingly big and handsome, these homes of the dead. Cut out of the living rock, they are just like houses. The roof has a beam cut to imitate the roof-beam of the house. It is a house, a home.

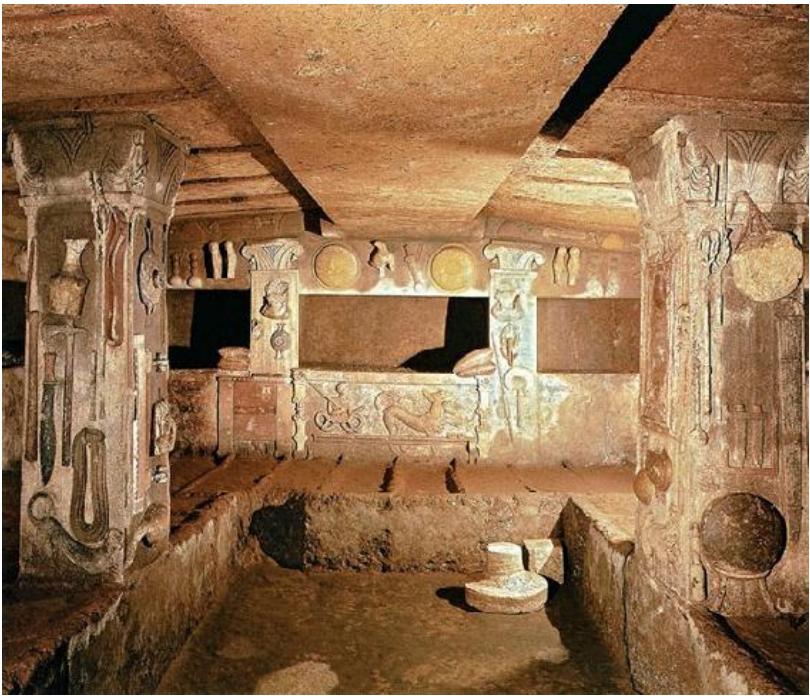
As you enter, there are two small chambers, one to the right, one to the left, antechambers. They say that here the ashes of the slaves were deposited, in urns, upon the great benches of rock. For the slaves were always burned, presumably. Whereas at Cerveteri the masters were laid full-length, sometimes in the great stone sarcophagi, sometimes in big coffins of terra cotta, in all their regalia. But most often they were just laid there on the broad rock-bed that goes round the tomb, and is empty now, laid there calmly upon an open bier, not shut in sarcophagi, but sleeping as if in life.

The central chamber is large; perhaps there is a great square column of rock left in the centre, apparently supporting the solid roof as a roof-tree supports the roof of a house. And all round the chamber goes the broad bed of rock, sometimes a double tier, on which the dead were laid, in their coffins, or lying open upon carved litters of stone or wood, a man glittering in golden armour, or a woman in white and crimson robes, with great necklaces round their necks, and rings on their fingers. Here lay the family, the great

chiefs and their wives, the Lucumones, and their sons and daughters, many in one tomb.

Beyond again is a rock doorway, rather narrow, and narrowing upwards, like Egypt. The whole thing suggests Egypt; but on the whole, here all is plain, simple, usually with no decoration, and with those easy, natural proportions whose beauty one hardly notices, they come so naturally, physically. It is the natural beauty of proportion of the phallic consciousness, contrasted with the more studied or ecstatic proportion of the mental and spiritual Consciousness we are accustomed to.

Through the inner doorway is the last chamber, small and dark and culminative. Facing the door goes the stone bed on which was laid, presumably, the Lucumo and the sacred treasures of the dead, the little bronze ship of death that should bear him over to the other world, the vases of jewels for his arraying, the vases of small dishes, the little bronze statuettes and tools, the weapons, the armour: all the amazing impedimenta of the important dead. Or sometimes in this inner room lay the woman, the great lady, in all her robes, with the mirror in her hand, and her treasures, her jewels and combs and silver boxes of cosmetics, in urns or vases ranged alongside. Splendid was the array they went with, into death.



Tomb of the Reliefs: Series of frescoes, bas-reliefs and sculptures portraying a large series of contemporary life tools, c. 3rd century BCE. Etruscan. Necropolis of Banditaccia, Cerveteri.



Tomb of the Lionesses: Female Dancer on the rear wall (detail), c. 530-520 BCE.
Etruscan. Wall painting. Tarquinia.

Excerpt from **Etruscan Places** by D. H. Lawrence

*Fragments of people at banquets, limbs that
dance without dancers, birds that fly in nowhere, lions
whose devouring heads are devoured away! Once it
was all bright and dancing ; the delight of the under
world ; honouring the dead with wine, and flutes
playing for a dance, and limbs whirling and pressing.
And it was deep and sincere honour rendered to the*

dead and to the mysteries. It is contrary to our ideas; but the ancients had their own philosophy for it. As the pagan old writer says: "For no part of us nor of our bodies shall be, which doth not feel religion: and let there be no lack of singing for the soul, no lack of leaping and of dancing for the knees and heart ; for all these know the gods"

Which is very evident in the Etruscan dancers. They know the gods in their very finger-tips. The wonderful fragments of limbs and bodies that dance on in a field of obliteration still know the gods, and make it evident to us.



*Tomb of the Triclinium: Male Musician (detail),
c. 480-470 BCE, Tarquinia. Wall painting.
Museo Archeologico, Tarquinia.*

Excerpt from **Etruscan Places** by D. H. Lawrence

A very lovely dance tomb is the Tomba del Triclinio, or del Convito, both of which mean: Tomb of the Feast. In size and shape this is much the same as the other tombs we have seen. It is a little chamber about fifteen feet by eleven, six feet high at the walls, about eight feet at the centre. It is again a tomb for one person, like nearly all the old painted tombs here. So there is no inner furnishing. Only the farther half

of the rock-floor, the pale yellow-white rock, is raised two or three inches, and on one side of this raised part are the four holes where the feet of the sarcophagus stood. For the rest, the tomb has only its painted walls and ceiling.

And how lovely these have been, and still are! The band of dancing figures that go round the room still is bright in colour, fresh, the women in thin spotted dresses of linen muslin and coloured mantles with fine borders, the men merely in a scarf. Wildly the bacchic woman throws back her head and curves out her long, strong fingers, wild and yet contained within herself, while the broad-bodied young man turns round to her, lifting his dancing hand to hers till the thumbs all but touch. They are dancing in the open, past little trees, and birds are running, and a little fox-tailed dog is watching something with the naive intensity of the young. Wildly and delightedly dances the next woman, every bit of her, in her soft boots and her bordered mantle, with jewels on her arms ; till one remembers the old dictum, that every part of the body and of the anima shall know religion, and be in touch with the gods. Towards her comes the young man piping on the double flute, and dancing as he comes. He is clothed only in a fine linen scarf with a border, that hangs over his arms, and his strong legs dance of themselves, so full of life. Yet, too, there is a certain solemn intensity in his face, as he turns to the woman beyond him, who swoops in a bow to him as she vibrates her castanets.



Head of a Young Woman from a Grave Naikos,
c. 320 BCE. Classical. Fine-grained white marble,
34.3 x 15.6 x 22.2 cm. The Getty Villa, Malibu.

Ancient Greeks and Romans

The early Greek authors described creation as a stupendous hollow globe cut in the centre by the plane of the earth. The upper hemisphere lit by magnificent luminaries; the lower hemisphere filled with perpetual darkness. The top of the higher sphere is heaven, the bright dwelling of the Olympian

gods; its bottom is the surface of the earth, the home of living men. The top of the lower sphere is Hades, the abode of the ghosts of the dead; its bottom is Tartarus, the prison of the Titans, rebellious giants vanquished by Zeus. Earth lays half-way from the surface of heaven to the floor of Tartarus. This distance is so great that, according to Hesiod, it would take an anvil nine days to fall from the centre to the nadir or the lowest point. Some of the ancients seem to have surmised the spherical nature of the earth, and to have thought that Hades was simply its dark side, the dead being our antipodes. In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses reaches Hades by sailing across the ocean stream and passing the eternal night land of the Cimmerians, whereupon he comes to the edge of Acheron, the moat of Pluto's sombre house. Virgil also says, "One pole of the earth to us always points aloft; but the other is seen by black Styx and the infernal ghosts, where either dead night forever reigns or else Aurora returns thither from us and brings them back the day." (Virgil, *Georgics*) But the prevalent notion evidently was that Hades was an immense hollow region not far under the surface of the ground, and that it was to be reached by descent through some cavern, like that of Avernus. This subterranean place is the destination of all human beings, rapacious Orcus, the Roman god of the underworld, spared no-one, good or bad. It is wrapped in obscurity, as the etymology of its name implies an invisible place. "No sun e'er gilds the gloomy horrors there; No cheerful gales refresh the stagnant air." (Virgil, *Georgics* II. 242-250)

The dead are hopeless in Hades and the living learn to fear this dismal realm. The shade of the valiant hero dwelling there, the swift-footed Achilles stated, "I would wish, being on earth, to serve for hire another man of poor estate, rather than rule over all the dead." Souls retain their physical characteristics, the fresh and ghastly appearance of the wounds that have encumbered them. Groups of fellow countrymen, circles of friends, congregate together, preserving their remembrance of earthly fortunes and beloved relatives left behind, and eagerly questioning each newly arriving soul for tidings from above. When the soul of Achilles is told of the glorious deeds of Neoptolemus, "he goes away taking mighty steps through the meadow of asphodel in joyfulness, because he had heard that his son was very illustrious." The dying Antigone says, "Departing, I strongly cherish the hope that I shall be fondly welcomed by my father, and by my mother, and by my brother." It is important to notice that, according to the early and popular view, this Hades, the "dark dwelling of the joyless images of deceased mortals," is the destination of universal humanity. In opposition to its dolorous gloom and repulsive inanity are vividly pictured the glad light of day, the glory and happiness of life. The incomparable son of Peleus said:

Not worth so much to me as my life, are all the treasures which populous Troy possessed, nor all which the stony threshold of Phoebus Apollo contains in rocky Pytho. Oxen, and fat sheep, and trophies, and horses with golden manes, may be acquired by effort; but the breath of man to return again is not to be obtained by

It is not probable that all the ornamental details illustrated by the poets with the fate and state of the dead as they are set forth, for instance, by Virgil in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* were ever credited as literal truth. But there is no reason to doubt that the essential features of this mythological scenery were accepted in the vulgar belief. For instance, that the popular mind honestly held that, in some vague sense or other, the ghost, on leaving the body, flitted down to the dull banks of Acheron and offered a shadowy obolus to Charon, the rugged old ferryman, for a passage in his boat, seems attested not only by a thousand averments to that effect in the current literature of the time, but also by the invariable custom of placing an obolus in the dead man's mouth for that purpose when he was buried.

The Greeks did not view the banishment of souls in Hades as a punishment for sin, or the result of any broken law in the plan of things. It was to them merely the fulfilment of the inevitable fate of creatures who must die, in the order of nature, like successive growths of flowers, and whose souls were too feeble to rank with gods and climb into Olympus. That man should cease from his substantial life on the bright earth and subside into sunless Hades, a vapid form, with nerveless limbs and faint voice, a ghostly vision bemoaning his existence with idle lamentation, or consuming himself with the hazy mockeries of his former pursuits, was melancholy enough; but it was rather his natural destiny, and not an avenging judgment.

However, that powerful instinct in man which desires to see villainy punished and goodness rewarded perpetuates, among so cultivated a people as the Greeks, to develop a doctrine of future compensation for the contrasted deserts of souls. The earliest trace of the idea of retribution which we find carried forward into the invisible world is the punishment of the Titans, those monsters who tried climbing mountains, storming the heavenly abodes, and seizing Thunderer's bolts from his hand. In addition, mythological characters such as Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Tityus are all punished by Zeus for their impiety and therefore condemned to a severe expiation in Tartarus. Finally, we discern a general prevalence of the belief that punishment is distributed, not by vindictive caprice, but on the grounds of universal morality. All souls wait in Hades to be judged according to their merits by Rhadamanthus, Minos, or Aeacus. The distribution of poetic justice in Hades at last became, with many authors so melodramatic as to furnish a fair subject for burlesque. A good example of this is outlined in the Emperor Julian's *Symposium*. The gods prepare for the Roman emperors a banquet, in the air, below the moon. The good emperors are admitted to the table with honours; but the bad ones are hurled headlong down into Tartarus, amidst the derisive shouts of the spectators.

As the notion that the wrath of the gods would pursue their enemies in the future state gave rise to a belief in the punishments of Tartarus, so the notion

that the distinguishing kindness of the gods would follow their favourites gave rise to the myth of Elysium. The Elysian Fields were earliest portrayed lying on the western margin of the earth, stretching from the verge of Oceanus, where the sun set at eve. They were covered with perpetual greenery, perfumed with the fragrance of flowers, and eternally refreshed by cool breezes. They were represented merely as the select abode of a small number of living humans, who were either the mortal relatives or the special favourites to the gods, and who were transported there to pass an immortality which was described, with great inconsistency, sometimes as purely happy, sometimes as joyless and wearisome. To all except a few chosen ones this region was utterly inaccessible. Homer says, "But for you, O Menelaus, it is not decreed by the gods to die; but the immortals will send you to the Elysian plain, because you are the son-in-law of Zeus." If the inheritance of this clime had been proclaimed as the reward of heroic merit, and if it had been believed achievable by virtue, it would have been held up as a prize to be attained. The whole account, as it was at first, bears the imprint of imaginative fiction as legibly upon its front as the story of the dragon-watched garden of Hesperus's daughters, whose trees bore golden apples, or the story of the enchanted isle in the Arabian tales.

The early location of Elysium and the conditions of admission to it were gradually changed; and at length it reappeared, in the underworld, as the abode of the just. On one side of the primitive Hades, Tartarus was designed to admit the condemned into its penal tortures, and on the other side Elysium was lowered down to reward the justified by receiving them into its peaceful and perennial happiness; while, between the two, Erebus remained as an intermediate state of negation and gloom for those in limbo. The vivid descriptions of this subterranean heaven, frequently found there, were rarely accepted as solid verities. They were scarcely ever used, to our knowledge, as motives in life, incitement in difficulties, and consolation in sorrow. They were mostly set forth in poems and other fictitious works. They were often denied and ridiculed in speeches and writings received with public applause. Still, they unquestionably exerted some influence on the common modes of thought and feeling, contributed to the shadowy in the popular imagination and heart, helped men to conceive of a blessed life hereafter and to long for it, and took away something of the artificial horror with which, under the power of rooted superstition, their departing ghosts hailed the shadowy limits of futurity.

From the examination of Greek mythology it can be inferred that the dead, a dull populace of ghosts, pass through the neutral melancholy of Hades without discrimination. And finally we discern in the world of the dead a sad middle region, with a Paradise on the right and a hell on the left, the whole presided over by three incorruptible judges, who appoint the newcomers their places in accordance to their moral worth.

The question now arises: What did the Greeks think in relation to the

ascent of human souls into heaven among the gods? Did they except none from the remediless doom of Hades? Was there no path for the wisest and best souls to climb starry Olympus? To dispose of this inquiry fairly, four distinct considerations must be examined. First, Ulysses sees in the infernal regions the image of Hercules shooting the shadows of the Stymphalian birds, while his soul is said to be rejoicing with fair legged Hebe at the banquets of the immortal gods in the skies. To explain this, we must remember that Herakles was the son of Alcmene, a mortal woman, and of Zeus, the king of the gods. Accordingly, in the flames on Mount Oeta, the surviving ghost which he derived from his mother descends to Hades, but the purified soul inherited from his father has the proper nature and rank of a deity, and is received into the Olympian synod. Of course no blessed life in heaven for the generality of men is here implied. Hercules, being a son and favourite of Zeus, has a corresponding destiny exceptional from that of other men.

Secondly, another double representation, somewhat similar, but having an entirely different interpretation, occurs in the case of Orion, the handsome Hyrian hunter whom Artemis loved. At one time he is described, like the spectre of the North American Indian, chasing over the Stygian plain the disembodied animals he had in his lifetime killed on the mountains:

*Swift through the gloom a giant hunter flies: A ponderous brazen mace, with direful
sway, Aloft he whirls to crush the savage prey; Grim beasts in trains, that by his
truncheon fell, Now, phantom forms, shoot o'er the lawn of hell.*



Tombstone from Mnesarete, c. 380 BCE.
Ancient Greek. Marble, height: 166 cm.
Glyptothek, Munich.



*Gravestone of Apollonia, c. 100 BCE,
Attica, Athens. Marble, 112.4 x 63.5 x 20 cm.
The Getty Villa, Malibu.*

Within common beliefs, this was without doubt received as actual fact. But at another time Orion is deified and shown as one of the grandest constellations of the sky: “A belted giant, who, with arm uplift, Threatening the throne of Zeus, forever stands, Sublimely impious.”

This, obviously, is merely a poetic symbol, a beautiful artifice employed by the poets to perpetuate a legend by associating it with the imperishable hieroglyphs of the galaxy. It is not credible that men imagined that group of stars only outlined in such shape by the help of arbitrary fancy to be literally

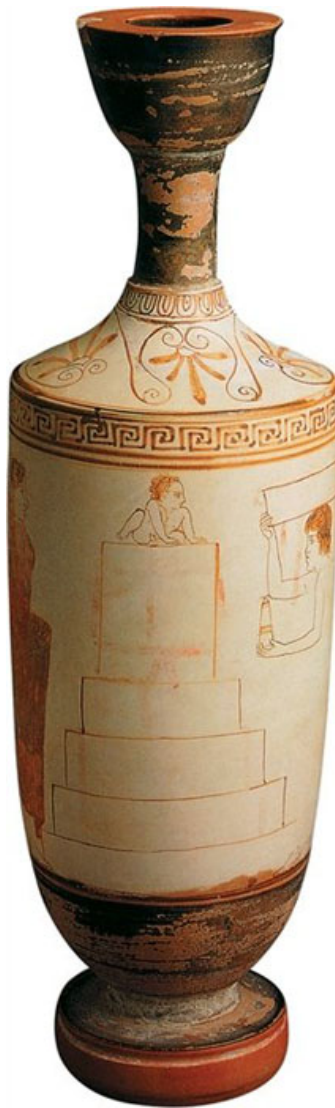
the translated hunter himself. The meaning simply was that he was immortalised through the eternal linking of his name and form with a stellar cluster which would always shine upon men. "The reverence and gratitude of a weak world for the heroes and benefactors they could not comprehend, named them divinities, whom they did star together to an idolatrous immortality which nationalised the heavens" with the shining shapes of the great and brave. These types of poetry, symbols lent to infant science, were never meant to indicate a literal translation and metamorphosis of human souls, but were honours paid to the memories of illustrious men, emblems and pledged securities of their unfading fame. With what glorious characters, with what forms of deathless beauty, defiant of decay, the sky was written over! Go out this evening beneath the old rolling dome, when the starry scroll is outspread, and you may still read the reveries of the marvelling minds of the antique world, as fresh in their magic loveliness as when the bards and seers of Olympus and the Agean first stamped them in Heaven. There "the great snake binds in his bright coil half the mighty host." There is Arion with his harp and the charmed dolphin. The fair Andromeda, still chained to her eternal rock, looks mournfully towards the delivering hero whose conquering hand bears aloft the horrid visage of Medusa. Far off in the north the gigantic Boötes is seen driving towards the Centaur and the Scorpion. And yonder, smiling benignantly upon the crews of many a home bound ship, are revealed the twin brothers, joined in the embrace of an undying friendship.

Thirdly, it is asserted by several Latin authors, in general terms, that the ghost goes to Hades but the soul ascends to heaven; and it has been inferred most erroneously that this statement contains the doctrine of an abode for men after death on high with the gods. Ovid expresses the real thought in full, thus: "The earth conceals the flesh; the shade flits round the tomb; the underworld receives the image; the spirit seeks the stars." Those supporting the opinions then prevalent at the time will scarcely doubt that these words were meant to express the return of the composite man to the primordial elements of which he was made. The particulars of the dissolving individual are absorbed in the general elements of the universe. Earth goes back to earth, ghost to the realm of ghosts, breath to the air, fiery essence of soul to the lofty ether in whose pure radiance the stars burn. Euripides expressly says that when man dies each part goes whence it came, "the body to the ground, the spirit to the ether." Therefore, the often misunderstood phrase of the Roman writers, "the soul seeks the stars," merely denotes the impersonal mingling after death of the divine portion of man's being with the parent divinity, who was supposed indeed to pervade all things, but more especially to reside beyond the empyrean.

Fourthly, what shall be said of the apotheosis of their celebrated heroes and emperors by the Greeks and Romans, whereby these were elevated to the dignity of deities, and seats were assigned them in heaven? What was the meaning of this ceremony? It does not signify that a celestial immortality

awaits all good men; because it appears as a thing attainable by very few, is only allotted by vote of the Senate. Neither was it supposed actually to confer on its recipient equality of attributes with the great gods, making them peers of Zeus and Apollo. The homage received as gods by Alexander and others during their lives, the deification of Julius Caesar during the most learned and sceptical age of Rome with other obvious considerations, render such a supposition inadmissible. In view of all the direct evidence and collateral probabilities, we conclude that the genuine import of an ancient apotheosis was this: that the soul of the deceased person so honoured was admitted, in deference to his transcendent merits, or as a special favour on the part of the gods, into heaven, into the divine society. He was really a human soul still, but was called a god because, instead of descending, like the multitude of human souls, to Hades, he was taken into the abode and company of the gods above the sky. This interpretation derives support from the remarkable declaration of Aristotle, that "of two friends one must be unwilling that the other should attain apotheosis, because in such case they must be forever separated." One would be in Olympus, the other in Hades. The belief that any, even a favoured few, could ever obtain this blessing, was of quite limited development, and probably sprang from the esoteric recesses of the Mysteries. To call a human soul a god is not so bold a speech as it may seem. Plotinus says, "Whoever has wisdom and true virtue in soul itself differs but little from superior beings, in this alone being inferior to them, that he is in body. Such a one, dying, may therefore properly say, with Empedocles, "Farewell! a god immortal now am I."

The expiring Vespasian exclaimed, "I shall soon be a god." Mure says that the doctrine of apotheosis belonged to the Græco Pelasgic race through all their history. Seneca severely satirises the ceremony, and the popular belief which upheld it, in an elaborate lampoon called *Apocolocyntosis*, or *The Reception of Claudius Among the Pumpkins*. The broad travesty of deification exhibited in Pumpkinification obviously measures the distance from the honest credulity of one class and period to the keen infidelity of another.



Attributed to the **Thanatos Painter**,
Mother and Maid at a Child's Tomb, Attica, c. 440 BCE.
White-ground lekythos on terracotta vase, height: c. 36 cm.
M.C. Carlos Museum, Carlos Collection of
Ancient Greek Art, Emory University, Atlanta.

One of the most important passages in Greek literature, in whatever aspect viewed, is composed of the writings of the great Theban lyricist. Let us see what representation is there made of the fate of man in the unseen world. The ethical perception, profound feeling, and searching mind of Pindar could not allow him to remain satisfied with the indiscriminating views of the future state prevalent in his time. Upon such a man the problem of death must weigh

as a conscious burden, and his reflections would naturally lead him to improved conclusions. Accordingly, we find him representing the Blessed Isles not as the haven of a few favourites of the gods, but as the reward of virtue; and the punishments of the wicked, too, are not dependent on fickle inclinations, but are decreed by immutable right. He does not describe the common multitude of the dead, leading a dark sad existence, like phantoms in a dream: his references to death and Hades seem cheerful in comparison with those of many other ancient Greek authors. Dionysius the Rhetorician, speaking of his Threnes, dirges sung at funerals, says, "Simonides lamented the dead pathetically, Pindar magnificently."

His conceptions of the life to come were inseparably connected with certain definite locations. He believed Hades to be the destination of all our mortal race, but conceived it subdivided into a Tartarus for the impious and an Elysium for the righteous. He thought that the starry firmament was the solid floor of a world of splendour, bliss, and immortality, inhabited by the gods, but fatally inaccessible to man. When he thinks of this place, it is with a sigh, a sigh that man's aspirations towards it are vain and his attempts to reach it irreverent. This latter thought he enforces by an earnest allusion to the myth of Bellerophon, who, daring to soar to the cerulean seat of the gods on the winged steed Pegasus, was punished for his arrogance by being hurled down headlong. These assertions are to be sustained by citations of his words. The references made are to Donaldson's edition.

In the second Pythian Ode Pindar repeats, and would appear to endorse, the old monitory legend of Ixion, who for his outrageous crimes was bound to an ever revolving wheel in Hades and made to utter warnings against such offences as his own. In the first Pythian Ode we read, "Hundred headed Typhon, enemy of the gods, lies in dreadful Tartarus." Among the preserved fragments of Pindar the one numbered two hundred and twenty three reads thus: "The bottom of Tartarus shall press thee down with solid necessities." The following is from the first Isthmian Ode: "He who, laying up private wealth, laughs at the poor, does not consider that he shall close up his life for Hades without honour." The latter part of the tenth Nemean Ode recounts, with every appearance of devout belief, the history of Castor and Pollux, the god-begotten twins, who, reversing conditions with each other on successive days and nights, spent their interchangeable immortality each alternately in heaven and in Hades. The astronomical interpretation of this account may be correct; but its applicability to the wondering faith of the earlier poets is extremely doubtful.



*Charon, Mother, and Baby Boy, Attica,
c. 430 BCE. White-ground lekythos
on terracotta vase, height: c. 36.5 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.*

The seventh Isthmian contains this remarkable sentence: “Unequal is the fate of man: he can think of great things, but is too ephemeral a creature to reach the brazen floored seat of the gods.” A similar sentiment is expressed in the sixth Nemean: “Men are a mere nothing; while to the gods the brazen heaven remains a firm abode forever.” The one hundred and two fragments are supposed to be a part of the dirge composed by Pindar on the death of the grandfather of Pericles. It runs in this way: “Whoso by good fortune has seen

the things in the hollow under the earth knows indeed the end of life: he also knows the beginning vouchsafed by Zeus.” It refers to initiation in the Eleusinian Mysteries, and means that the initiate understands the life which follows death. It is well known that a clear doctrine of future retribution was inculcated in the Mysteries long before it found general publication. The ninety-fifth fragment is all that remains to us of a dirge which appears, from the allusion in the first line, to have been sung at a funeral service performed at midnight, or at least after sunset. “While it is night here with us, to those below shines the might of the sun; and the red rosied meadows of their suburbs are filled with the frankincense tree, and with golden fruits. Some delight themselves there with steeds and exercises, others with games, others with lyres; and among them all fair blossoming fortune blooms, and a fragrance is distilled through the lovely region, and they constantly mingle all kinds of offerings with the far shining fire on the altars of the gods.” This evidently is a picture of the happy scenes in the fields that stretch around the City of the Blessed in the under world, and is introduced as a comfort to the mourners over the dead body.

The ensuing passage, the most important one on our subject, is from the second Olympic Ode. “An honourable, virtuous man may rest assured as to his future fate. The souls of the lawless, departing from this life, suffer punishment. One beneath the earth, pronouncing sentence by a hateful necessity imposed upon him, declares the doom for offences committed in this realm of Zeus. But the good lead a life without a tear, among those honoured by the gods for having always delighted in virtue: the others endure a life too dreadful to look upon. Whoever has had resolution thrice in both worlds to stand firm, and to keep his soul pure from evil, has found the path of Zeus to the tower of Kronos, where the airs of the ocean breathe around the Isle of the Blessed, and where some from resplendent trees, others from the water glitter golden flowers, with garlands of which they wreath their wrists and brows in the righteous assemblies of Rhadamanthus, whom father Kronos has as his willing assistant.” The “path of Zeus,” in the above quotation, means the path which Zeus takes when he goes to visit his father Kronos, whom he originally dethroned and banished, but with whom he is now reconciled, and who has become the ruler of the departed spirits of the just, in a peaceful and joyous region.



*Tomb of Via dei Cristallini: a Griffin (detail),
first part of the 3rd century BCE. Naples.*

The following passage constitutes the ninety-eighth fragment.

To those who descend from a fruitless and ill-starred life, Persephone (the Queen of the Dead) will grant a compensation for their former misfortune, after eight years (the judicial period of atonement and lustration for great crimes) granting them their lives again. Then, illustrious kings, strong, swift, wise, they shall become the mightiest leaders; and afterwards they shall be invoked by men as sacred heroes.

In this piece, as in the preceding one where reference is made to the thrice living man, is contained the doctrine, early brought from the East, that souls may repeatedly return from the dead and in new bodies lead new lives. One other fragment, the ninety-sixth, added to the foregoing, will make up all the important genuine passages in Pindar relating to the future life:

By a beneficent allotment, all travel to an end freeing from toil. The body indeed is subject to the power of death; but the eternal image is left alive, and this alone is allied to the gods. When we are asleep, it shows in many dreams the approaching judgment concerning happiness and misery.

When our physical limbs are stretched in insensible repose, the inward spirit, rallying its sleepless and prophetic powers, foretells the balancing awards of another world.

We must not wholly confound with the mythological schemes of the

vulgar creed the belief of the nobler philosophers, many of whom, as is well known, cherished an exalted faith in the survival of the conscious soul and in a just retribution. "Strike!" one of them said, with the dauntless courage of an immortal, to a tyrant who had threatened to have him brayed in a mortar: "Strike! you may crush the shell of Anaxarchus: you cannot touch his life."

An account of the Greek views on the subject of a future life which should omit the doctrine of Plato would be defective. The influence of this sublime autocrat in the realms of intellect has transcended calculation. However coldly his thoughts may have been regarded by his contemporary countrymen, they soon obtained cosmopolitan audience, and surviving the ravages of time and ignorance, overleaping the bars of rival schools and sects, appreciated and diffused by the loftiest spirits of succeeding ages, closely blended with their own speculations by many Christian theologians have held an almost unparalleled dominion over the minds of millions of men for more than fifty generations.

In the various dialogues of Plato, written at different periods of his life, there are numerous variations and inconsistencies of doctrine. There are also many mythical passages obviously intended as symbolic statements, poetic drapery, by no means to be handled or looked at as the severe outlines of dialectic truth. Furthermore, in these works there are a vast number of opinions and expressions introduced by the interlocutors, who often belong to antagonistic schools of philosophy, and for which, of course, Plato is not to be held responsible. Making allowance for these facts, and resolutely grappling with the many other difficulties of the task, we shall now attempt to exhibit what we consider were the real teachings of Plato in relation to the fate of the soul. This exposition, inadequate as it is and open to question may be in some sense carefully weighed as a result of earnest, patient, and repeated study of all the relevant passages.

In the first place, it is plain that Plato had a firm religious and philosophical faith in the immortality of the soul, which was continually attracting his thoughts, making it a favourite theme with him and exerting no faint influence on his life. This faith rested both on ancient traditions, to which he frequently refers with invariable reverence, and on metaphysical reasoning, which he over and over presents in forms of conscientious elaboration. There are two tests of his sincerity of faith: first, that he always treats the subject with profound seriousness; secondly, that he always uses it as a practical motive. "I do not think," said Socrates, "that anyone who should now hear us, even though he were a comic poet, would say that I am talking idly." Again, referring to Homer's description of the judgments in Hades, he says, "I, therefore, Callicles, am persuaded by these accounts, and consider how I may exhibit my soul before the judge in the most healthy condition." "To a base man no man nor god is a friend on earth while living, nor under it when dead," say the souls of their ancestors to the living; "but live honourably, and when your destined fate brings you below you shall come to us as friends to

friends.” “We are plants, not of earth, but of heaven.” We start, then, with the affirmation that Plato honestly and cordially believed in a future life.

Secondly, his ethical and spiritual beliefs, like those of nearly all the ancients, were closely interwoven with physical theories and local relations. The world to him consisted of two parts, the celestial region of ideas, and the mundane region of material phenomena, corresponding pretty well, as Lewes suggests, to our modern conception of heaven and earth. Near the close of the *Phado*, Socrates says that the earth is not of the kind and magnitude usually supposed.

We dwell in a decayed and corroded, muddy and filthy region in the sediment and hollows of the earth, and imagine that we inhabit its upper parts; just as if one dwelling in the bottom of the sea should think that he dwelt on the sea, and, beholding the sun through the water, should imagine that the sea was the heavens. So, if we could fly up to the summit of the air as fishes emerging from the sea to behold what is on the earth here and emerge hence, we should know that the true earth is there. The people there dwell with the gods, and see things as they really are; and what the sea is to us the air is to them, and what the air is to us the ether is to them.

Again, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, eleventh chapter, the soul is metaphorically said in the sea of this corporeal life to get stones and shell fish attached to it, and, fed on earth, to be rendered to a great extent earthy, stony, and savage, like the marine Glaucus, some parts of whose body were broken off and others worn away by the waves, while such quantities of shells, seaweed, and stones had grown to him that he more resembled a beast than a man. In keeping with the whole tenor of the Platonic teaching, this is a fine illustration of the fallen state of man in his vile environment of flesh here below. The soul, in its earthly sojourn, embodied here, is as much mutilated and degraded from its equipped and pure condition in its lofty natal home, the archetypal world of Truth above the base Babel of material existence, as Glaucus was on descending from his human life on the sunny shore to his encrusted shape and blind prowling in the monstrous deep.

At another time Plato contrasts the situation of the soul on earth with its situation in heaven by the famous comparison of the dark cave. He supposes men, unable to look upwards, dwelling in a cavern which has an opening towards the light extending lengthwise through the top of the cavern. A great many images, carrying various objects and talking aloud, pass along the edge of the opening. Their shadows fall on the side of the cave below, in front of the dwellers there; also the echoes of their talk sound back from the wall. Now, the men, never having been or looked out of the cave, would suppose these shadows to be the real beings, these echoes the real voices. As respects this figure, says Plato, we must compare ourselves with such persons. The visible region around us is the cave, the sun is the light, and the soul's ascent into the region of mind is the ascent out of the cave and the contemplation of things above.



*Tomb of Agios Athanasios: Macedonian Soldiers,
c. 4th-3rd century BCE. Fresco. Near Thessaloniki.*

Still again, Plato describes the ethereal paths and motions of the gods, who, in their chariots, which are the planets and stars, ride through the universe, accompanied by all pure souls, “the family of true science, contemplating things as they really are.” “Reaching the summit, they proceed outside, and, standing on the back of heaven, its revolution carries them round, and they behold that super celestial region which no poet here can ever sing of as it deserves.” In this archetypal world all souls of men have dwelt, though “few have memory enough left ... after their fall hither ... to call to mind former things from the present”:

Now, of justice and temperance, and whatever else souls deem precious, there are here but faint resemblances, dull images; but beauty was then splendid to look on when we, in company with the gods, beheld that blissful spectacle, and were initiated into that most blessed of all mysteries, which we celebrated when we were unaffected by the evils that awaited us in time to come, and when we beheld, in the pure light, perfect and calm visions, being ourselves pure and as yet unmasked with this shell of a body to which we are now fettered.

To suppose all this employed by Plato as mere fancy and metaphor is to commit an egregious error. In studying an ancient author, we must forsake the modern standpoint of analysis, and envelop ourselves in the ancient atmosphere of thought, where poetry and science were as indistinguishably blended in the personal beliefs as oxygen and nitrogen are in the common air. We have not a doubt that Plato means to teach, literally, that the soul was always immortal, and that in its anterior states of existence, in the realm of ideas on high, it was in the midst of those essential realities whose shifting shadows alone it can behold in its lapsed condition and bodily imprisonment here. He closely intertwined ethical and physical theories, spiritual destinies with localities, and the fortunes of men with the revolutions of the earth and stars. This fact, of which one can hardly read the *Timaus* and fail to see, continually reappears. It is strikingly shown in his idea of the consummation of all things at regular epochs determined by the recurrence of a grand revolution of the universe, a period vulgarly known under the name of the “Platonic Year.” The second point, therefore, in the present explanation of Plato’s doctrine of another life, is the conception that there is in the empyrean a glorious world of incorruptible truth, beauty, and goodness, the place of the gods, the native haunt of souls; and that human souls, having yielded to base

attractions and sunk into bodies, are but banished sojourners in this phenomenal world of evanescent shadows and illusions, where they are “stung with resistless longings for the skies, and only solaced by the vague and broken reminiscences of their former state.”



*Tomb of Agios Athanasios: The Young Lance Carrier,
Guardian of the Tomb, last quarter of the 4th century BCE.
Wall painting. Near Thessaloniki.*



Cist Tomb: Feminine Figure Sitting on the South Side (detail) c. 3rd-1st century BCE. Amhipolis.

Plato taught that after death that the soul would undergo an unerring judgment based on its vices and virtues. “To go to Hades with a soul full of crimes is the worst of all evils.” “When a man dies, he possesses in the other world a destiny suited to the life which he has led in this.” In the second book of the Republic he says, “We shall in Hades suffer the punishment of our misdeeds here;” and he argues at much length the absolute impossibility of escaping this. A full reward for all wisdom and justice and a full retribution for all faults are asserted unequivocally in scores of passages, most of them

connecting the former with the notion of an ascent to the bright region of truth and intellect, the latter with a descent to the black penal realm of Hades. "Some souls, being sentenced, go to places of punishment beneath the earth; others are borne upward to some region in heaven." He proves the authenticity of his faith in this doctrine by continually propelling it, in the most earnest, unaffected manner, as an animating motive in the formation of character and the conduct of life, saying, "He who neglects his soul will pass lamely through existence, and again pass into Hades, aimless and unserviceable."

The fourth and last step in this exposition is to show the particular form in which Plato held his doctrine of future retribution; the way in which he supposed the consequences of present good and evil would appear hereafter. He discussed the theory of transmigration - souls being born over and over. The banishment of the wicked to Tartarus is provisional, a preparation for their return to incarnate life. The residence of the good in heaven is contingent, and will be lost the moment they yield to carelessness or material solicitations. The circumstances under which they are reborn, the happiness or misery of their renewed existence, depend on their character and conduct in their previous career; and thus a poetic justice is secured. At the close of the *Timaus*, Plato describes the whole animal kingdom as consisting of degraded human souls, from "the tribe of birds, which were light minded souls, to the tribe of oysters, which have received the most remote habitations as a punishment of their extreme ignorance. [...] After this manner, then, both formerly and now, animals transmigrate, experiencing their changes through the loss or acquisition of intellect and folly." The general doctrine of metempsychosis is stated and implied very frequently in many of the Platonic dialogues. More recent writers have tried to explain these representations as figures of speech, not intended to portray the literal facts, but merely to hint their moral equivalents.

We are led by the following considerations to think that Plato really meant to accredit the transmigration of souls literally. First, he often makes use of the current poetic imagery of Hades, and of ancient traditions, avowedly in a loose metaphorical way, as moral helps, calling them "fables." But the metempsychosis he sets forth, without any such qualification or guard, with so much earnestness and frequency, as a promise and a warning, that we are forced, in the absence of any indication to the contrary, to suppose that he meant the statements as sober fact and not as mythical drapery. As with a parable, of course, we need not interpret all the ornamental details literally; but we must accept the central idea. And in the present case, the fundamental thought is that of repeated births of the soul, each birth trailing retributive effects from the foregone. For example, the last four chapters of the tenth book of the *Republic* contain the account of Erus, a Pamphylian, who, after lying dead on the battle field for ten days, was revived, and told what he had seen in the other state. Plato in the outset explicitly names this recital an

“apologue.” It recounts a multitude of moral and physical particulars. These details may fairly enough be considered in some degrees mythical drapery, or as the usual traditional painting; but the essential conception running through the account, for the sake of which it is told, we are not at liberty to explain away as empty metaphor. Now, that essential conception is precisely this: that souls after death are sentenced to Hades or to heaven as a retribution for their sin or virtue, and that, after an appropriate sojourn in those places, they are born again, the former ascending, squalid and scarred, from beneath the earth, the latter descending, pure, from the sky. In perfect consonance with this conclusion is the moral drawn by Plato from the whole narrative. He simply says, “If the company will be persuaded by me, considering the soul to be immortal and able to bear all evil and good, we shall always persevere in the road which leads upwards.”

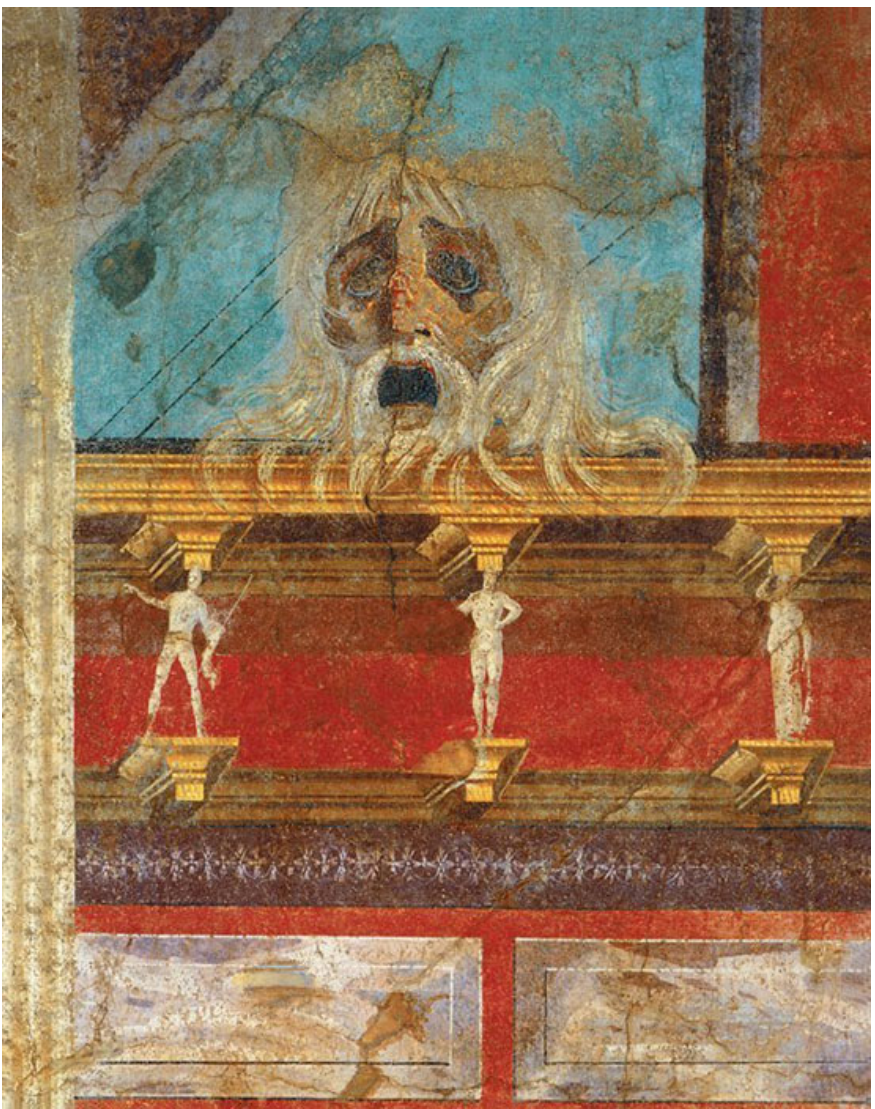


Tomb of the Swing: Feminine Figure Sitting (detail),
last quarter of the 3rd century BCE.
Chalk painting, 34 x 28 cm.
Archaeological Site of Cyrene, near Shahhat, Libya.

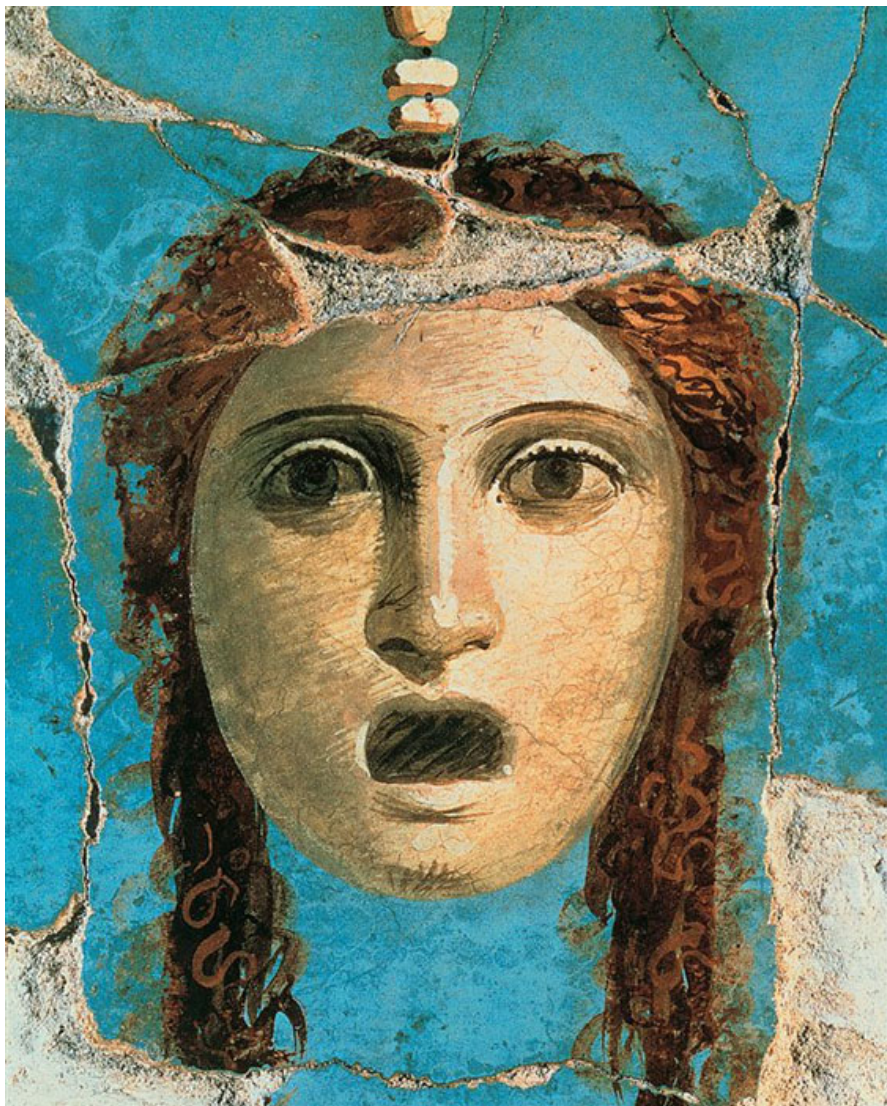
Secondly, the conception of the metempsychosis is thoroughly coherent with Plato's whole philosophy. If he was in earnest about any doctrine, it was the doctrine that all knowledge is reminiscence. The following declarations are his. "Soul is older than body." "Souls are continually born over again from Hades into this life." "To search and learn is simply to revive the images of what the soul saw in its pre-existent state of being in the world of realities." Why should we hesitate to attribute a sincere belief in the metempsychosis to

the acknowledged author of the doctrine that the soul lived in another world before appearing here, and that its knowledge is but reminiscence? If born from the other world once, we may be many times; and then all that is wanted to complete the dogma of transmigration is the idea of a presiding justice. Had not Plato that idea?

Thirdly, the doctrine of a judicial metempsychosis was most profoundly rooted in the popular faith, as a strict verity, throughout the great East, ages before the time of Plato, and was familiarly known throughout Greece in his time. It had been adapted by Musaeus and Orpheus at an early period, and was consequently recommended and established by the Pythagoreans, and was unquestionably held by many of Plato's contemporaries. He refers once to those "who strongly believe that murderers who have gone to Hades will be obliged to come back and end their next lives by suffering the same fate which they had before inflicted on others." It is also a remarkable fact that he states the conditions of transmigration, and the means of securing exemption from it, in the same way that the Hindus have from immemorial time: "The soul which has beheld the essence of truth remains free from harm until the next revolution; and if it can preserve the vision of the truth it shall always remain free from harm," that is, be exempt from birth; but "when it fails to behold the field of truth it falls to the earth and is implanted in a body." This statement and several others in the context corresponds precisely with Hindu theology, which proclaims that the soul, upon attaining real wisdom, that is, upon penetrating beneath illusions and gazing on reality, is freed from the painful necessity of repeated births. Now, since the Hindus and the Pythagoreans held the doctrine as a severe truth, and Plato states it in the identical forms which they employed, and never implies that he is merely poetising, we naturally conclude that he, too, veritably inculcates it as fact.



Male Theatre Mask (detail), 3rd quarter of the 1st century BCE.
Villa de Publius Fannius Synistor, Boscoreale.
Fresco. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples.



Female Theatre Mask, before 60 CE. Fresco.
Casa del Bracciale d'Oro (VI 17, 42), Pompeii.



Tomb Chamber: The Heroic Death Depicted on Horseback,
c. 340-320 BCE. Fresco, height: 145 cm.
Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Paestum, Paestum.

The great chorus of Plato's interpreters, from Plotinus to Leroux, with scarcely a dissentient voice, approve the opinion pronounced by the learned German historian of philosophy, that "the conception of the metempsychosis is so closely interwoven both with his physical system and with his ethical as to justify the conviction that Plato looked upon it as legitimate and valid, and not as a merely figurative exposition of the soul's life after death." To sum up the whole in one sentence: Plato taught with grave earnestness the immortality of the soul, subject to a discriminating retribution, which opened for its

temporary residences three local regions, heaven, earth, and Hades, and which sometimes led it through different grades of embodied being. "O thou youth who thinkest that thou art neglected by the gods, the person who has become more wicked departs to the more wicked souls; but he who has become better departs to the better souls, both in life and in all deaths."

Whether Aristotle taught or denied the immortality of the soul has been the subject of innumerable debates from his own time until now. It is certainly a most ominous fact that his great name has been cited as authority for rejecting the doctrine of a future life by so many of his keenest followers; for this has been true of weighty representatives of every generation of his disciples. Antagonistic advocates have collected from his works a large number of varying statements, endeavouring to distinguish between the literal and the figurative, the esoteric and the popular. It is not worth our while here, either for their intrinsic interest or for their historic importance, to quote the passages and examine the arguments. All that is required for our purpose may be expressed in the language of Ritter, who has carefully investigated the whole subject: "No passage in his extant works is decisive; but, from the general context of his doctrine, it is clear that he had no conception of the immortality of any individual rational entity."

It would take a whole volume instead of a chapter to set forth the multifarious contrasting tenets of individual Greek philosophers, from the age of Pherecydes to that of Iamblichus, in relation to a future life. Many philosophers sided with Empedocles, supporting the idea that human life is a penal state, the doom of such immortal souls as for guilt have been disgraced and expelled from heaven. "Man is a fallen god condemned to wander on the earth, sky aspiring but sense clouded." Purged by a sufficient penance, he returns to his former godlike existence. "When, leaving this body, thou comest to the free ether, thou shalt be no longer a mortal, but an undying god." Notions of this sort fairly represent no small proportion of the speculations upon the fate of the soul which often reappear throughout the course of Greek literature. Another class of philosophers are represented by such names as Marcus Antoninus, who, comparing death to disembarkation at the close of a voyage, says, "If you land upon another life, it will not be empty of gods: if you land in nonentity, you will have done with pleasures, pains, and drudgery." And again he writes, "If souls survive, how has ethereal space made room for them all from eternity? How has the earth found room for all the bodies buried in it? The solution of the latter problem will solve the former. The corpse turns to dust and makes space for another: so the spirit, let loose into the air, after a while dissolves, and is either renewed into another soul or absorbed into the universe. Thus room is made for succession." These passages, it will be observed, leave the survival of the soul at all entirely hypothetical, and, even supposing it to survive, allow it but a temporary duration. Such was the common view of the great sect of the Stoics. They all agreed that there was no real immortality for the soul; but they differed greatly

as to the time of its dissolution. In the words of Cicero, "Diu mansuros aiunt animos; semper, negant:" they say souls endure for a long time, but not forever. Cleanthes taught that the intensity of existence after death would depend on the strength or weakness of the particular soul. Chrysippus held that only the souls of the wise and good would survive at all. Panatius said the soul always died with the body, because it was born with it, which he proved by the resemblances of children's souls to those of their parents. Seneca has a great many contradictory passages on this subject in his works; but his preponderant authority, upon the whole, is that the soul and the body perish together. At one point he says, "The day thou fearest as the last is the birthday of eternity. [...] As an infant in the womb is preparing to dwell in this world, so ought we to consider our present life as a preparation for the life to come." At another time he says, with stunning bluntness, "There is nothing after death, and death itself is nothing."



Sarcophagus of Constantina, c. 340 CE.
Ancient Roman. Porphyry.
Museo Pio Clementino, Vatican City.



Sarcophagus from Acilia, 260-270 BCE.
Ancient Roman. Marble. Museo Nazionale Romano,
Palazzo Massimo, Rome.

Besides the mystics, like Plotinus, who affirmed the strict eternity of the soul, and the Stoics, who believed that the soul, has both a beginning and end despite the fact that it endures for a long period after leaving the body, there were two other classes of Greek and Roman believers who believed in future life. The commoners subscribed to the mythical fables concerning Hades; while the educated elite cast off popular superstitions, clinging tenaciously to the grand idea of immortality.

There was among the populace, both Greek and Roman, even from the age of Eumolpus to that of Augustus, a firm faith in a future life, according to the

abundant references within classic mythology. A thousand current allusions and statements in the general literature of those times prove the actual existence of a common and literal belief in Hades with all its accompaniments. Plato says, "Many, of their own accord, have wished to descend into Hades, induced by the hope of there seeing and being with those they have loved." He also says, "When a man is about to die, the stories of future punishment which he had formerly ridiculed trouble him with fears of their truth."

The same thing is shown by the religious ritual enacted at funerals and festivals, the forms of public and private worship observed till after the conversion of Constantine. The cake of rice and honey borne in the dead hand for Cerberus, the periodical offerings to the ghosts of the departed, as at the festivals called Feralia and Parentalia, the pictures of the scenery of the under world, hung in the temples, of which there was a famous one by Polygnotus, all imply a literal crediting of the vulgar doctrine. Altars were set up on the spots where Tiberius and Caius Gracchus were murdered, and services were there performed in honour of their manes. Festus, an old Roman lexicographer who lived in the second or third century, tells us there was in the Comitium a stone-covered pit which was supposed to be the mouth of Orcus, and was opened three days in the year for souls to rise out into the upper world. Apuleius describes, in his treatise on "The God of Socrates," the Roman conceptions of the departed spirits of men. They called all disembodied human souls "lemures." Those of good men were "lares," those of bad men "larva." And when it was uncertain whether the specified soul was a lares or a larva, it was named "manes." The lares were mild household gods to their posterity. The larva were wandering, frightful shapes, harmless to the pious, but destructive to the reprobate.



Attributed to **Scopas**, *Grave Stone Stele of a Hunter with His Father, a Sitting Slave and a Dog*, c. 340 BCE, the bed of the Ilissos River, Athens. Ancient Greek. Marble, height: 168 cm. National Archaeological Museum, Athens.

The belief in necromancy is well known to have prevailed extensively among the Greeks and Romans. Aristophanes represents the coward, Pisander, going to a necromancer and asking to “see his own soul, which had long departed, leaving him a man with breath alone.” In Latin literature no popular terror is more frequently alluded to or exemplified than the dread of seeing ghosts. Everyone will recall the story of the phantom that appeared in the tent of Brutus before the battle of Philippi. It pervades the “Haunted House” of

Plautus. Callimachus wrote the following couplet as an epitaph on the celebrated misanthrope: "Timon, hat'st thou the world or Hades worse? Speak clear! Hades, O fool, because there are more of us here!"

Pythagoras is said once to have explained an earthquake as being caused by a synod of ghosts assembled under ground! It is one of the best of the numerous jokes attributed to the great Samian; a good nut for the spirit rappers to crack. There is an epigram by Diogenes Laertius, on one Lycon, who died of gout: "He who before could not so much as walk alone, The whole long road to Hades travell'd in one night!"

Philostratus declares that the shade of Apollonius appeared to a sceptical disciple of his and said, "The soul is immortal." It is unquestionable that the superstitious fables about the underworld and ghosts had a powerful hold, for a very long period, upon the Greek and Roman imagination, and were widely accepted as facts.

At the same time, there were many persons of more advanced culture to whom such coarse and fanciful representations had become incredible, but who still held loyally to the simple idea of the survival of the soul. They cherished a strong expectation of another life, although they rejected the revolting form and drapery in which the doctrine was usually set forth. Xenophon puts the following speech into the mouth of the expiring Cyrus:

I was never able, my children, to persuade myself that the soul, as long as it was in a mortal body, lived, but when it was removed from this, that it died; neither could I believe that the soul ceased to think when separated from the unthinking and senseless body; but it seemed to me most probable that when pure and free from any union with the body, it became most wise.

Everyone has read of the young man whose faith and curiosity were so excited by Plato's writings that he committed suicide to test the fact of futurity. Callimachus tells the story neatly: "Cleombrotus, the Ambracian, having said, 'Farewell, O sun!' leap'd from a lofty wall into the world of ghosts. No deadly ill had chanced to him at all; But he had read in Plato's book upon the soul." The falling of Cato on his sword at Utica, after carefully perusing the Phado, is equally familiar. In the case of Cicero, too, notwithstanding his fluctuations of feeling and the obvious contradictions of sentiment in some of his letters and his more deliberate essays, it is, upon the whole, plain enough that, while he always regarded the vulgar notions as puerile falsehoods, he believed in the idea of a future life. This was inferred from a careful examination of his theories on the subject.

At the siege of Jerusalem, Titus made a speech to his soldiers, saying to them, "Those souls which are severed from their fleshly bodies by the sword in battle are received by the pure ether and joined to that company which are placed among the stars." The beautiful story of Cupid and Psyche, that loveliest of all the myths concerning the immortality of the soul, was a creation by no means foreign to the prevalent ideas and feelings of the time

when it was written. The “Dissertations” of Maximus Tyrius abound with sentences like the following:

This very thing which the multitude calls death is the birth of a new life, and the beginning of immortality [...] When Pherecydes lay sick, conscious of spiritual energy, he cared not for bodily disease, his soul standing erect and looking for release from its cumbersome vestment. So a man in chains, seeing the walls of his prison crumbling, waits for deliverance, that from the darkness in which he has been buried he may soar to the ethereal regions and be filled with glorious light.



*Column drum from the later Temple of Artemis at Ephesus:
Thanatos as a winged and sword-girt youth, Alkestis,
Hermes with caduceus and Persephone, c. 340-320 BCE.
Marble, height: 184 cm; diameter (lower): 197 cm.
The British Museum, London.*

The conception of man as a member of the cosmic family of gods and genii was known to all the classic philosophers, and was cherished by the larger portion of them. Pindar affirms one origin for gods and men. Plato makes wise souls accompany the gods in their excursions about the sky. Cicero argues that heaven, and not Hades, is the destination of the soul at death, because the soul, being lighter than the earthly elements surrounding it here, would rise aloft through the natural force of gravitation. Plutarch says, "Demons are the spies and scouts of the gods, wandering and circuiting around on their commands." Disembodied souls and demons were the same.

The prevalence of such ideas as these produced in the Greek and Roman imagination a profound sense of invisible beings, a sense which was further intensified by the popular personifications of all natural forces, as in fountains and trees, full of lapsing naiads and rustling dryads. An illustrative fact is furnished by an effect of the tradition that Thetis, snatching the body of Achilles from the funeral pile, conveyed him to Leuke, an island in the Black Sea. The mariners sailing by often fancied they saw his mighty shade flitting along the shore in the dusk of evening. But a passage in Hesiod yields a more adequate illustration:

When the mortal remains of those who flourished during the golden age were hidden beneath the earth, their souls became beneficent demons, still hovering over the world they once inhabited, and still watching, clothed in thin air and gliding rapidly through every region of the earth, as guardians over the affairs of men.

But there were always some who denied the common doctrine of a future life and belittled its physical features. Through the absurd extravagances of poets and augurs, and through the growth of critical thought, this unbelief went on increasing from the days of Anaxagoras, when it was death to call the sun a ball of fire, to the days of Catiline, when Julius Caesar could be chosen Pontifex Maximus, almost before the Senate had ceased to reverberate his voice openly asserting that death was the utter end of man. Plutarch dilates upon the wide scepticism of the Greeks as to the infernal world, at the close of his essay on the maxim, "Live concealed." The portentous growth of irreverent unbelief, the immense change of feeling from awe to ribaldry, is made obvious by a glance from the known gravity of Hesiod's *Descent of Theseus and Pirithous into Hades*, to Lucian's *Kataplous*, which represents the cobbler Mycillus leaping from the banks of the Styx, swimming after Charon's boat, climbing into it upon the shoulders of the tyrant Megapenthes and tormenting him the whole way. Pliny, in his Natural History, affirms that death is an everlasting sleep. The whole great sect of the Epicureans united in supporting that belief by the combined force of ridicule and argument. Their views are the most fully and ably defended by the consummate Lucretius, in his masterly poem on the "Nature of Things." Horace, Juvenal, Persius, concur in scouting at the tales which once, when recited on the stage, had made vast audiences perceptibly tremble. And Cicero asks, "What old woman is so insane as to fear these things?"

There were two classes of people who sought differently to free mankind from the terrors which had invested the whole prospect of death and another world. The first were the materialists, who endeavoured to prove that death was to man the absolute end of everything. Secondly, there were the later Platonists, who maintained that this world is the only Hades, that heaven is our home, that all death is ascent to better life. "To remain on high with the gods is life; to descend into this world is death, a descent into Orcus," they said. The following couplet, of an unknown date, is translated from the Greek

Anthology: “Diogenes, whose tub stood by the road, Now, being dead, has the stars for his abode.” Macrobius writes, in his commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*:

Here, on earth, is the cavern of Dis, the infernal region. The river of oblivion is the wandering of the mind forgetting the majesty of its former life and thinking a residence in the body the only life. Phlegethon is the fires of wrath and desire. Acheron is retributive sadness. Cocytus is wailing tears. Styx is the whirlpool of hatreds. The vulture eternally tearing the liver is the torment of an evil conscience.

To the ancient Greek in general, death was a sad doom. When he lost a friend, he said a melancholy farewell to him. When it was his turn to die, he departed with a lingering look at the sun, and a tearful adieu to the bright day and the green earth. To the Roman, death was a grim reality. To meet it himself he girded up his loins with artificial firmness. But at its ravages among his friends he wailed in anguished abandonment. To his dying vision there was indeed a future; but shapes of distrust and shadow stood upon its disconsolate borders; and, when the prospect had no horror, he still shrank from its gloom.



Gravestone of the Haterii Tomb: Crane and Tomb,
c. 100-110 CE. Ancient Roman. Marble,
131 x 104 cm. Museo Gregoriano Profano, Vatican City.

Thus solemn rites and holy vows we paid
To all the phantom-nations of the dead;
Then died the sheep: a purple torrent flow'd,
And all the caverns smoked with streaming blood.
When lo! appear'd along the dusky coasts,
Thin, airy shoals of visionary ghosts:
Fair, pensive youths, and soft enamour'd maids;
And wither'd elders, pale and wrinkled shades;
Ghastly with wounds the forms of warriors slain
Stalk'd with majestic port, a martial train:

*These and a thousand more swarm'd o'er the ground,
And all the dire assembly shriek'd around.
Astonish'd at the sight, aghast I stood,
And a cold fear ran shivering through my blood;
Straight I command the sacrifice to haste,
Straight the flay'd victims to the flames are cast,
And mutter'd vows, and mystic song applied
To grisly Pluto, and his gloomy bride.*

— Homer's **Odyssey**, xi.625-637



Grave Naikos: Relief of a Girl with Her Doll and Pet Goose, c. 360 BCE. Classical. Fine-grained white marble, 72.5 x 36 x 12.5 cm. The Getty Villa, Malibu.

*But oh, beloved by Heaven! reserved to thee
A happier lot the smiling Fates decree:
Free from that law, beneath whose mortal sway
Matter is changed, and varying forms decay,
Elysium shall be thine: the blissful plains
Of utmost earth, where Rhadamanthus reigns.
Joys ever young, unmix'd with pain or fear,
Fill the wide circle of the eternal year:
Stern winter smiles on that auspicious clime:
The fields are florid with unfading prime;*

*From the bleak pole no winds inclement blow,
Mould the round hail, or flake the fleecy snow;
But from the breezy deep the blest inhale
The fragrant murmurs of the western gale.
This grace peculiar will the gods afford
To thee, the son of Jove, and beauteous Helen's lord.*

—Homer's **Odyssey**, iv.761-776



Grave Naiskos: Relief of a Seated Man
(*The Lansdowne Homer*), c. 75 BCE. Hellenic.
Fine-grained white marble, 143.5 x 100 x 26.8 cm.
The Getty Villa, Malibu.

Ulysses by Lord Alfred Tennyson

*It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed*

Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers;
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle —
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me —
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days

*Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.*



*Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, c. 359 CE.
Early Christian. Marble, 141.5 x 95.75 cm.
Museo Storico del Tesoro della Basilica
di San Pietro, Rome.*

*And I saw high seats, and they were seated on them, and the right of judging was given to them: and I saw the
for the word of God, and those who did not give worship to the beast, or to his image, and had not his mark on
with Christ a thousand years.*

*The rest of the dead did not come to life again till the thousand years were ended. This is the first coming back.
Happy and holy is he who has a part in this first coming: over these the second death has no authority, but they
thousand years.*

*And I saw a great white seat, and him who was seated on it, before whose face the earth and the heaven went in
And I saw the dead, great and small, taking their places before the high seat; and the books were open, and an
judged by the things which were in the books, even by their works.*

*And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and Hell gave up the dead which were in them; and t
And death and Hell were put into the sea of fire. This is the second death, even the sea of fire.*

And if anyone's name was not in the book of life, he went down into the sea of fire.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were gone; and there was no n

*And I saw the holy town, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, like a bride made beautiful for
And there came to my ears a great voice out of the high seat, saying: "See, the Tent of God is with men, and he
and God himself will be with them, and be their God.*

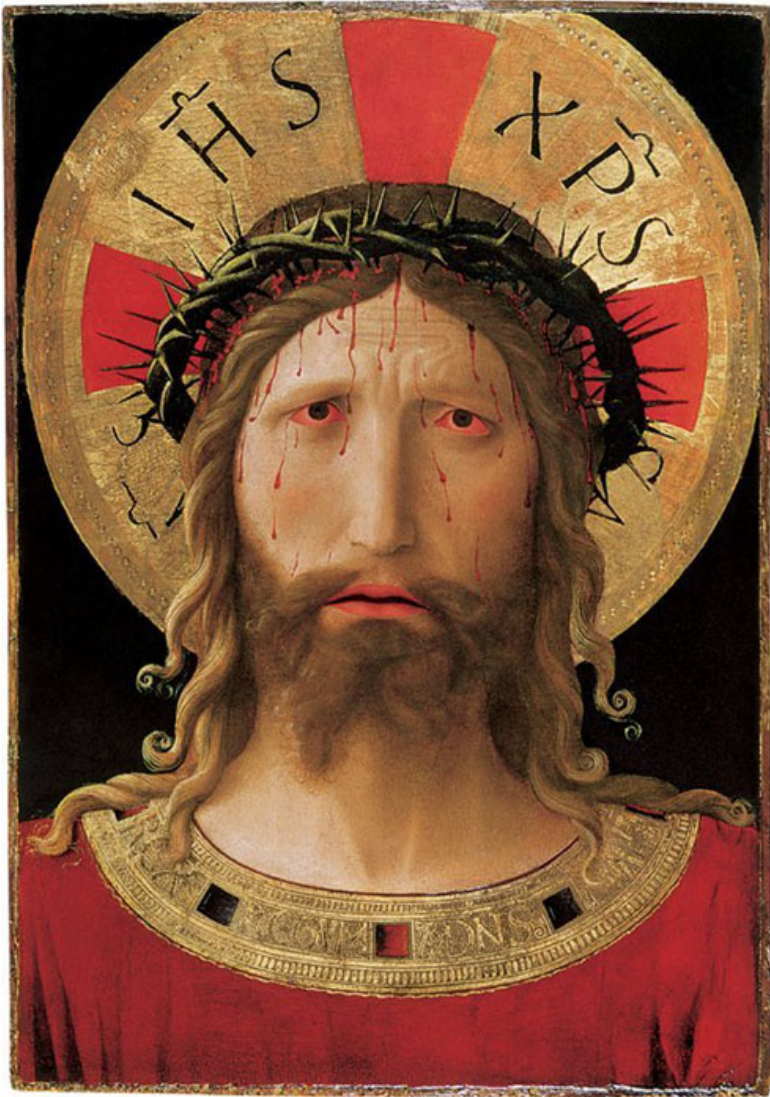
And he will put an end to all their weeping; and there will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain; for

And he who is seated on the high seat said: "See, I make all things new." And he said: "Put it in the book; for

*And he said to me: "It is done. I am the First and the Last, the start and the end. I will freely give of the founta
He who overcomes will have these things for his heritage; and I will be his God, and he will be my son.*

*But those who are full of fear and without faith, the unclean and takers of life, those who do the sins of the flesh
images, and all those who are false, will have their part in the sea of ever-burning fire which is the second dea*

— **Holy Bible**, Revelation, XX, 4-6, 11-15; XXI, 1-8.



Fra Angelico, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*.
Tempera and gold on panel, 55 x 39 cm.
Parrocchia di Santa Maria del Soccorso, Livorno.

Christianity

Early-Christian Doctrine of Future Life

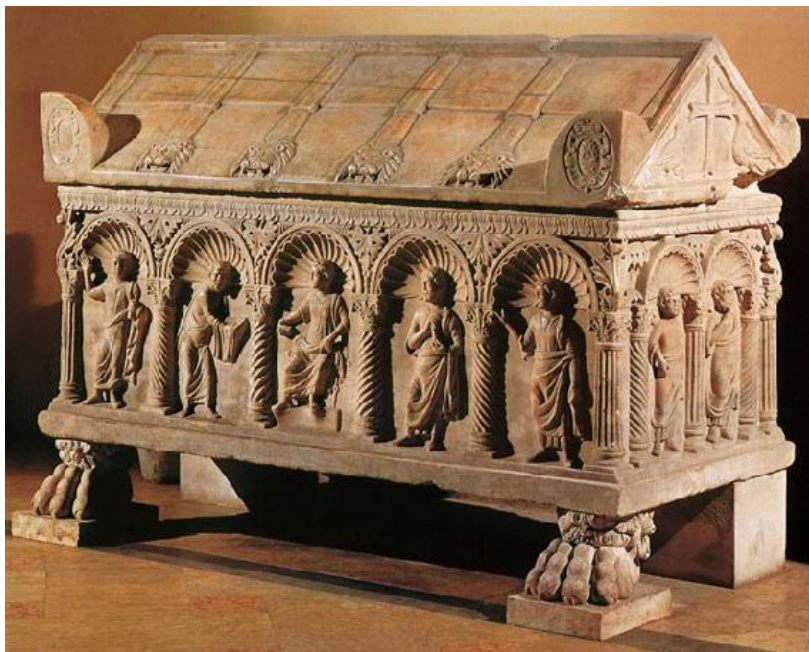
The principal components of the doctrine of the future life held during the age of the Church Fathers (c. 160-604 CE) is generally referred to as orthodox

teaching. It was believed that Jesus himself taught a purely moral doctrine concerning the future life, a doctrine free from arbitrary, mechanical, or sacerdotal peculiarities. With experimental knowledge, with inspired insight, with fullest authority, he set forth conclusions aligned with the human hope that immortality awaits the soul in the realm of the divine father (depending of course on ethical and spiritual conditions). To this simple and sublime doctrine announced by Jesus, so rational and satisfactory, the apostles added various notions, such as the local descent of Christ into the prison world of the dead, his mission there, his visible second coming, a bodily resurrection, a universal scenic judgment, and other affiliated views. This peculiar theological work of the apostles concentrated on the life of Christ yet also combined the Persian Jewish doctrine of the Pharisees. The theological work of the Fathers in regard to the doctrine thus formed by the apostles was twofold. The first being that they were unsatisfied with the swift second coming of Christ, and decided to further develop the intermediate state of the dead. Secondly, as a result of the long and vehement controversies which arose, they were advised to complete and systematise their theology, to define their terms, to explain and defend their doctrines, comparing them together and attempting to harmonise them with history, reason, and ethics, as well as with Scripture and tradition. Meanwhile, defining and systematising continued, loose notions hardened into rigid dogmas, free thought was hampered by authority. The scheme assumed the title of orthodox, anathematising all who dared to dissent, and eventually the fundamental outlines of the patristic eschatology were firmly established.

In seeking to understand and to illustrate this scheme of faith, we have three principle aids. First, we explore the symbols or confessions of faith put forth by several of the leading theologians at the time, or by general councils, and openly adopted as authority in many of the churches, the creed falsely called the Apostles', extant as early as the close of the third century, the creed of Arius, that of Cyril, the Nicene creed, the creed falsely named the Athanasian, and others. Secondly, we have the valuable assistance given by the treatises of Irenaus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Augustine, and others concerning the heresies that had arisen in the Church, treatises which make it easy to infer, by contrast and construction, what was considered orthodox from the statement of what was acknowledged heretical. And, thirdly, abundant resources are provided in the extant theological dissertations, and historical documents of the principal ecclesiastical authors of the time in review, a cycle of well known names, sweeping from Theophilus of Antioch to Photius of Byzantium, from Cyprian of Carthage to Maurus of Mentz. We think that any candid person, mastering these sources of information in the illustrating and discriminating light of a sufficient knowledge of the previous and the succeeding related opinions, will recognise in the following abstract a fair representation of the doctrine of a future life as it was held by the orthodox Fathers of the Christian Church in the period extending from the 1st

to the 10th century.

Before proceeding to set forth the common patristic scheme, a few preliminary remarks are necessary in relation to some of the peculiar, prominent features of Origen's theology, and in relation to the rival systems of Augustine and Pelagius. Origen was a man of vast learning, passionately fond of philosophy; and he combined and modified several eastern and platonic notions with his theology. He imagined that innumerable worlds had existed and perished in the past, and that future worlds would continue this pattern. He believed that all souls, whether devils, men, angels, were of the same rank; that all who exist in material bodies are imprisoned in them as a punishment for sins committed in a previous state. The fig leaves in which Adam and Eve were dressed after their sin were the fleshly bodies they were compelled to become upon expulsion from Eden; until by penance and wisdom they slowly won their deliverance. This gradual descent and ascent of souls being figuratively represented by Jacob's ladder; all punishments and rewards are exactly fitted to the degree of sin or merit, without possibility of failure; all suffering even that in the lowest hell is benevolent and remedial, so that even the worst spirits, including Satan himself, shall after a time be restored to heaven; that this alternation of fall and restoration shall be continued so often as the cloy and satiety of heavenly bliss, or the preponderant power of temptation, pervert free will into sin. He declared that it was impossible to explain the phenomena and experience of human life, or to justify the ways of God, except by admitting that souls sinned in a pre-existent state. He disregarded the idea of vicarious atonement, and instead viewed Christ's suffering as having merely the same efficacy as the death of any innocent person, only more renowned. He discusses the mission of Christ as a means to illustrate the ways in which God can forgive and absolve humankind from sin, banishment and hell, in addition to portraying the power of salvation.



*Sarcophagus: Christ Restoring the Law, 4th or 5th century CE.
Early Christian. Marble. Ravenna.*

The famous controversy between Augustine and Pelagius shook Christendom for a century and a half, and even has a place in modern theology. Augustine was more Calvinistic in his doctrines than both the Fathers before him, and those after him (as the majority of the Fathers sided with Pelagius). Despite this, his system prevailed, and was publicly adopted for all Christendom by the third general council at Ephesus in the year 431 CE. Yet some of its principles were never implemented to the degree that he had envisioned. For instance, his dogma of unconditional election that outlines that only select individuals are predestined to eternal salvation and others to eternal damnation has never been practised by the Roman Catholic Church. When Gottschalk advocated this in the 9th century, it was condemned as a heresy. Augustine's belief must therefore be taken as a representation of the general patristic belief only with caution and with qualifications. The distinctive views of Augustine as contrasted with those of Pelagius were as follow. Augustine believed that as a result of the fault of Adam, humanity was doomed to an eternal banishment in the infernal world. Pelagius denied the doctrine of original sin, and made each one responsible only for his own personal sins. Augustine taught that baptism was necessary to free its subject from the power which the devil had over the soul on account of original sin, and that all would infallibly be doomed to hell who were not baptised, except, first, the ancient saints, who foreknew the evangelic doctrines and were

believers, and, secondly, the martyrs, whose blood was their baptism. Pelagius claimed that Christian baptism was only necessary to secure an entrance into heaven: infants and good men, if unbaptised; would enjoy a happy immortality in Paradise, but they never could enter the kingdom of heaven. Augustine affirmed that Adam's sin destroyed the freedom of the will in the whole human race. Pelagius asserted the freedom of the individual will. Augustine declared that a select few were arbitrarily elected to salvation from eternity, and that Christ died only for them. Pelagius taught that salvation or reprobation depended on personal penance, and that the divine election was purely merit based. Augustine said that saving grace was supernatural, irresistible, and unattainable by human effort. Pelagius believed it was circumstantial and could be awarded or resisted depending on the individual's allegiance to certain conditions. Augustine insisted that bodily death was inflicted as a punishment for sin while Pelagius claimed that it was the result of a natural law. Augustine's remorseless, logical consistency enabled him to harmonise the various theological elements and notions of the time into a generalised system that in theory adhered to patristic thought, yet in practice was too revolting and immoral to ever win universal assent. With these hints, we are ready to advance to the general patristic scheme of eschatology. The exceptional variations and heresies will be referred to afterwards.

First, in regard to the natural state of humanity under the law and subject of moral condition and destination, no-one can deny that the Fathers commonly believed that the dissolution of the body and the descent of the soul to the underworld was a penalty brought on all men through the sin of the first man - this was the indiscriminate and inevitable doom. Secondly, they thought that Christ came from heaven to redeem men from their lost state and subterranean bondage and to guide them to the afterlife. What, then, was the essence and method of Christ's redemptive mission according to the Fathers? Christ, as they believed, was a super-angelic being, the only son of God, possessing a nature, powers, and credentials transcending those delegated to any other being below God himself. He became flesh, to seek and to save the lost. This saving work was done not by his mortal sufferings alone, but by the totality of labours extending through the whole period of his incarnation. The subjective or moral part of his redemptive mission was to regenerate the characters of men and fit them for heaven by his teachings and example; the objective or physical part was to deliver their souls from the fatal confinement of the underworld and secure for them the gracious freedom of the sky, by descending himself as the suppressing conqueror of death and then ascending as the beckoning pioneer of his followers. The Fathers did not indicate Christ's death as the pivot of human redemption; but they regarded that redemption as a manifestation of his complete humiliation, instruction, example, suffering, and triumph, as the result of all the combined acts of his incarnate drama. The relevant writings of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius, Cyril, Ambrose, Augustine himself, Jerome,

Chrysostom, and the rest of the prominent authors of the first ten centuries, invariably speak of redemption, not in connection with Christ's death alone, but emphatically in connection with the group of ideas, his incarnation, death, descent, resurrection, and ascension! For the most part, they understood that as a result of original sin all men were doomed to die, that is, to leave their bodies and descend into the shadowy realm of death. They also accepted that when Christ, the sinless and resistless Son of God, died, before his immaculate divinity the walls fell, the devils fled, the prisoners' chains snapped, and the power of Satan was broken. They believed that through the mediation of Christ the original blessings forfeited by Adam were to be restored, and that men, instead of undergoing death and banishment to hell, should be transported to heaven.

In the progressive course of dogmatic controversy, metaphysical speculation, and desire for system, explanations have been devised in a hundred different forms, from that of Aquinas to that of Calvin; from that of Anselm to that of Grotius; from that of Socinus to that of Bushnell. Tertullian describes the profound abyss beneath the grave as the place where the dead are detained unto the 'day of judgment', and where Christ in his descent made the patriarchs and prophets his companions.



Catacombs: The Crossing of the Red Sea. Fresco. Rome.



*The Crucifixion and the Iconoclasts,
 Chludov Psalter (folio 67r), c. 850-875 CE.
 19.5 x 15 cm. State Historical Museum, Moscow.*



*The Massacre of Innocents (detail of the vault),
12th century. Panteón de los Reyes,
Real Colegiata de San Isidoro, León.*

It was the orthodox belief that Christ led the ancient saints who were waiting for his appearance in the underworld up into Paradise, yet he only granted them the power to save themselves, removing the previously challenging obstacles. However those who prescribed to the dogma of predestination, of course, believed that only a select few were granted with the power of personal salvation. Baptism was vital, giving efficacy to the decree of election in each individual case. Augustine says, “All are born under the power of the devil, held in chains by him as a jailer: baptism alone, through the force of Christ’s redemptive work, breaks these chains and secures heaven.” In regard to this necessity of baptism Pelagius agreed with his great

adversary, saving an unessential modification, as we have seen before. The same may be said of Cyprian, Tertullian, and many other leading Fathers. The Athanasian Creed elucidates the prevalent opinion of the Church in the 5th and 6th centuries, asserting that those unsupportive of the Trinity and Patristic dogmas “without doubt shall perish everlastingly.” Finally, in the writings of nearly all of the Fathers, we find frequent declarations of the necessity of moral virtue, righteous conduct, and piety, as a condition of admission into the kingdom of heaven. For example, Augustine says, “Such as have been baptised, partaken of the sacraments, and remained always in the catholic faith, but have led wicked lives, can have no hope of escaping eternal damnation.” Despite the fact that these points were not sharply defined, authoritatively established, and consistently adhered to; there was a general agreement among the body of the Fathers that for actual salvation there were three necessary conditions: baptism, a sound faith, and a life of purity.

The Fathers believed that none of the righteous dead could be admitted into heaven itself, the abode of God and his angels, until after the second coming of Christ and the Day of Judgement; meanwhile all were detained in an intermediate state, the ‘good’ in a peaceful region of the underworld enjoying a taste of their future paradise and the condemned in a dismal region of the same underworld getting a preview of their future suffering. After the numerous evidences given in previous chapters of the prevalence of this view among the Fathers, it would be superfluous to cite further authorities here. We will only reply to an objection which may be urged. It may be said that the Fathers believed that Enoch and Elijah were translated to heaven, also that the patriarchs, whom Christ rescued on his descent to Hades, were admitted and furthermore, that the martyrs by special privilege were granted entrance there. Some of the Fathers regarded Paradise as one division of the underworld; some located it in a remote and blessed region of the earth; others thought it was celestial and existed high in the air, but below the dwelling place of God. Now, it was to Paradise, not to heaven, that the dying thief, penitent on the cross, was promised admission. It was of Paradise, not of heaven, that Tertullian said “the blood of the martyrs is the perfect key.” So, too, when Jerome, Chrysostom, and others speak of a few favoured ones exempt from the common fate before the Day of Judgment, it is Paradise, and not heaven, that is offered to them.

A notable attempt has been repeatedly made for example, by the famous Dr. Coward, by Dodwell, to prove that the Fathers of the Greek Church, in opposition to the Latin Fathers, denied the consciousness of the soul during the interval from death to the resurrection, and maintained that the soul died with the body and was not restored until the last day. But this is an error arising from the misinterpretation of the figurative terms in which the Greek Fathers express themselves. Tatian, Justin, Theophilus, and Irenaus do not differ from the others in reality, but only in words. The opinion that the soul is literally mortal is erroneously attributed to those Greek Fathers, who in truth

no more held it than Tertullian did. The “death” they are referring to is an eternal existence in the ghostly underworld. They believed that the inner man (the soul and spirit) was indestructibly united and blessed. Yet by sin, the soul, ignorant of its divine origin, loses the spirit and becomes subject to death and darkness. However those influenced by the mission of Christ are rejuvenated and therefore humanity is elevated again to conscious communion with God, and the spirit is restored to the soul.

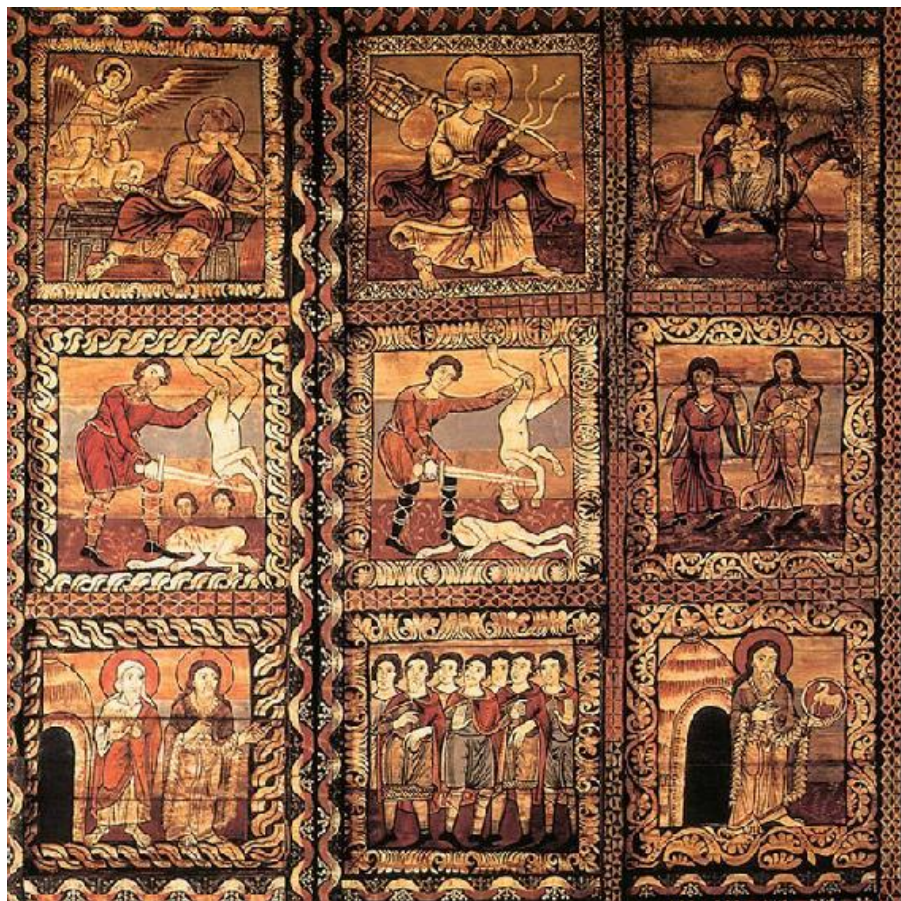
Finally, the Fathers expected that Christ would return from heaven, hold a general day of judgment, and consummate all things. The earliest disciples seem to have looked anxiously, almost from hour to hour, for that awful crisis. But, as years rolled on and the last apostle died, and it came not, the date was fixed more remotely; and, as other years passed away, and still no clear signs of its arrival appeared, the date grew more and more indefinite. Some still looked for the solemn dawn speedily to break; others assigned it to the year 1000; others left the time utterly vague; but none gave up the doctrine. All agreed that sooner or later a time would come when the deep sky would open, and Christ, clothed in terrors and surrounded by pomp of angels, would alight on the globe, when: The angel of the trumpet, Shall split the charnel earth, With his blast so clear and brave, And quicken the charnel birth, At the roots of the grave, Till the dead all stand erect.”

Augustine, representing the catholic faith, says, “The coming of Elias, the conversion of the Jews, Antichrist’s persecution, the setting up of Christ’s tribunal, the raising of the dead, the severing of the good and the bad, the burning of the world, and its renovation, this is the destined order of events.” The saved were to be transported bodily to the eternal bliss of heaven; the damned, were to be banished forever to a fiery hell in the centre of the earth, forced to endure both physical and spiritual agony. There were important, and for a considerable period quite extensive, exceptions, to the belief in this last dogma: nevertheless, such was undeniably the prevailing view, the orthodox doctrine, of the patristic Church. The strict literality with which these doctrines were held is strikingly shown in Jerome’s artless question: “If the dead be not raised with flesh and bones, how can the damned, after the judgment, gnash their teeth in hell?”

During the period now under consideration there were great fluctuations, growths, and changes of opinion on three subjects in regard to which the public beliefs did not prevent all freedom of thought by laying down definite propositions. We refer to baptism, the millennium, and purgatory. Christian baptism was first simply a rite of initiation into the Christian religion. Then it became more distinctly a symbol of the faith in Christ and his gospel, in addition to an emblem of a new birth. It was believed to be essential to personal salvation, breaking the chains of the devil, absolving original sin, and opening the door of heaven.

Almost all the early Fathers believingly looked for a millennium, a reign of Christ on earth with his saints for a thousand years. Daille has shown that this

belief was generally held, though with great diversities of conception as to the form and features of the doctrine. Some supposed the millennium would precede the destruction of the world, others that it would follow that terrible event, after a general renovation. None but the faithful would have part in it; and at its close they would pass up to heaven. Irenaus quotes a tradition, delivered by Papias, that “in the millennium each vine will bear ten thousand branches, each branch ten thousand twigs, each twig ten thousand clusters, each cluster ten thousand grapes, each grape yielding a hogshead of wine; and if anyone plucks a grape its neighbours will cry, Take me: I am better!” This, of course, was a metaphor to show the many pleasures that may result after the millennium. According to the heretics Cerinthus and Marcion, the millennium consisted of an abundance of all sorts of sensual riches and delights. Many of the orthodox Fathers held the same view, while others believed its splendours to be more moral. Origen attacked the whole doctrine with vehemence and cogency. His admirers continued after him, and the belief in this celestial paradise of luxury sank into comparative neglect. The subject rose into importance again at the close of the first millennium, but soon died away as the excitement of that ominous epoch passed with equal disappointment to the hopes and the fears of the believers. A resurgence of this belief was carried out in the 19th century by the modern sect of Second Adventists. Large volumes have been published discussing the second coming of Christ. The root of this idea suggests that when Christ’s real teachings and life are followed, the kingdom of God will indeed cover the world, and not for a thousand years only, but unimaginable glory and happiness shall fill the dwellings of the successive generations of humankind forever.



Painted ceiling (detail), 1109-1140. Paint on fir wood panel, 9 of 153 panel squares, 90 x 90 cm.
Church of St. Martin, Zillis.



Beresford Hope Cross: Crucifixion and Theotokos with Saints (front and back of the cross), 800-900 CE, probably Italy. Gold, cloisonné enamel and silver gilt. 8.5 x 5.5 x 1.8 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The doctrine of a purgatory, a place intermediate between Paradise and hell, where souls not too sinful were temporarily punished, and where their condition and stay were in the power of the Church on earth; a doctrine which in the Middle Age became practically the foremost instrument of ecclesiastical influence. It seems to have been first openly avowed as a Church dogma and effectively organised as a working power by Pope Gregory the Great, in the latter part of the 6th century. This idea will be further explored in

the section devoted to the medieval doctrine of future life.

Several ideas associated with the future life were generally viewed as heresies by the fathers. One of the earliest of these was the destruction of the intermediate state and the denial of the general judgment by the assertion, which Paul charges so early as in his day upon Hymeneus and Philetus, "that the resurrection has passed already;" that is, that the soul, when it leaves the body, passes immediately to its final destination. This opinion reappeared faintly at intervals, but obtained very little prevalence in the early ages of the Church. Hierax, an author who lived at Leontopolis in Egypt early in the 4th century, denied the resurrection of the body, and excluded from the kingdom of heaven all who were married and all who died prematurely. Another heretical notion which attracted some attention was that the soul dies with the body, and will be restored to life with it in the general resurrection at the end of the world; an opinion held by an Arabian sect of Christians, who were vanquished in debate about it with Origen. Still another doctrine known among the Fathers was the belief that Christ, when he descended into the underworld, saved all the inhabitants regardless of their religious status and life values. This was number seventy-nine in Augustine's list of the heresies.

The numerous Gnostic sects represented by Valentinus, Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, and other less prominent names, held a system of speculation copious, complex, and of an eastern influence. They taught that all souls pre-existed in a world of pure light, but through sin, they fell into abysmal darkness and were therefore bound by their bodies. Through sensual lusts and ignorance, they were doomed to suffer after death in hell for various periods, until rebirth. Jehovah was the enemy of the true God, and was the builder of this world and of hell. In this realm he imprisoned his victims and forced them to worship him. Christ came to reveal the true God, unmask the infernal character and wiles of Jehovah, to rescue those whom he had cruelly confined to hell and to teach men the about salvation. Accordingly, Marcion declared that when Christ descended into the underworld he released and took into his own kingdom Cain, the Sodomites, and all the Gentiles who had refused to obey the demon worshipped by the Jews, but left there, unsaved, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs, together with all the prophets. The Gnostics agreed in attributing evil and performed fasts and scourges to the flesh in means of redemption. Of course, with one accord they vehemently assailed the dogma of the resurrection of the flesh. Their views, too, were inconsistent with the strict eternity of future hell punishments. The fundamental basis of their system was the same as that of nearly all the eastern philosophies and religions. They subscribed to the notion that the body is evil, and the cause of this evil was ubiquitous even among the orthodox Fathers. However the Fathers didn't carry this idea to extremes of the Gnostics, indignantly rejecting all the strange explanations which those heretics had devised to describe the subject of evil in a systematic manner. Augustine said, "If we say all sin comes from the flesh, we make the fleshless

devil sinless!" Hermogenes, some of whose views were slightly connected to Gnosticism, believed the abyss of hell was formed by the confluence of matter, and that the devil and all his demons would at last be utterly resolved into matter.

The theological system of the Manichaean sect was in some of its cardinal principles almost identical with those of the Gnostics, but it was still more imaginative and elaborate. It started with the Persian doctrine of two antagonist deities, one dwelling with good spirits in a world of light and love, the other with demons in a realm of darkness and horror. The good God built this world of mingled light and darkness to afford these imprisoned souls an opportunity to purge their sins and be restored by him. In arranging the material substances to form the earth, a mass of evil fire, with no particle of good contained within it in was detected and excluded. This formed the Machinean hell which was presided over by demons and therefore cast out of the world and confined within the dark air. If a soul, while in the body, practiced a severe ascetic moral discipline, fixed its thoughts, affections, and prayers on God and its native home, it was allowed to leave the body and return to the celestial light. However if it neglected these duties and became more deeply entangled in the toils of depraved matter, it was cast into the awful fire of hell, where the cleansing flames of torture partially purify it; and then it is born again and put on a new trial. If after ten successive births, twice in each of five different forms, the soul was still beyond reclamation, then it was permanently sentenced to the furnace of hell. At last, when all the celestial souls seized by the princes of darkness had returned to God, this world was burned. Then the children of God could lead a life of everlasting blessedness with him in their native land of light; the prince of evil and his clan of brutes were expelled to the realm of darkness. Then all those souls whose salvation was hopeless became the watchmen and guards of the world of darkness, to protecting its frontiers forever and preventing its inhabitants from invading the kingdom of light.

The Christian after Christ's own pattern, trusting that when the soul left the body it would find a home in some other realm of God's universe, sought to carry out the will and beliefs of the Fathers. The apostolic Christian, conceiving that Christ would soon return to raise the dead and reward his own, eagerly looked forward to the arrival of this day, and strove that he might be among the saints who were once delivered or exempt from the Hadean imprisonment, should reign with the triumphant Messiah on earth and accompany him back to heaven. The patristic Christian, eagerly awaited the divided underworld where all the dead wrestled and prayed to be summoned by Christ and accepted in heaven. The Manichean Christian, believing the soul to be imprisoned in matter by demons who fought against God in a previous life, struggled, by fasting, thought, prayer, and penance, to rescue the spirit from its fleshly entanglements, from all worldly snares and illusions, that it might be freed from the necessity of any further abode in a material

body, and, on the dissolution of its present tabernacle, might soar to its native light in the blissful presence of the eternal being.

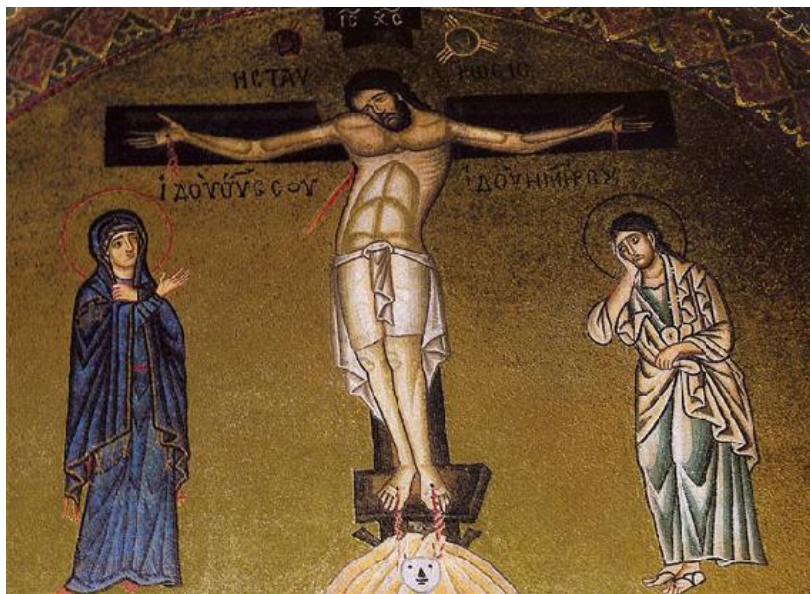
Medieval Doctrine of Future Life

The period of time covered by the present chapter reaches from the close of the 10th century to the middle of the 16th, from the first full establishment of the Roman Catholic theology and the last general expectation of the immediate end of the world to the commencing decline of medieval faith and the successful inauguration of the Protestant Reformation. The principal mental characteristic of that age, especially in regard to the subject of the future life, was fear. "Never," says Michelet, "can we know in what terrors the Middle Age lived." There was all abroad a living fear of men, fear of the State, fear of the Church, fear of God, fear of the devil, fear of hell, fear of death. Preaching consisted very much in the invitation, "Submit to the guidance of the Church while you live," enforced by the threat, "or you shall go to hell when you die." Christianity was practically reduced to some cruel metaphysical dogmas, a mechanical device for rescuing the devil's captives from him, and a system of ritual magic in the hands of a priesthood who wielded an authority of supernatural terrors over a credulous and shuddering laity. It is true that the genuine spirit and contents of Christianity were never wholly suppressed. The love of God, the blessed mediation of the benignant Jesus, the lowly delights of the Beatitudes, the redeeming assurance of pardon, the consoling, triumphant expectation of heaven, were never utterly banished even from the believers of the Dark Age. Undoubtedly many a guilty but repentant soul found forgiveness and rest, many a meek and spotless breast was filled with pious rapture, many a dying disciple was comforted and inspired, by the good tidings proclaimed from priestly lips even then. No doubt the sacred awe and guarded peace surrounding their precincts, the divine lessons inculcated within their walls, the pathetic prayers breathed before their altars, the traditions of saintly men and women who had drawn angelic visitants down to their cells and had risen long ago to be angels themselves, the strains of unearthly melody bearing the hearts of the kneeling crowd into eternity, no doubt these often made cathedral and convent seem "islands of sanctity amidst the wild, roaring, godless sea of the world." Still, the chief general feeling of the time in relation to the future life was unquestionably fear springing from belief, the wedlock of superstitious faith and horror.

During the six centuries now under review, the Roman Catholic Church and its theology were the only Christianity publicly recognised. The heretics were few and powerless, and the papal system had full sway. Since the early part of the period specified, the working theology of the Roman Church has undergone but few, and, as pertaining to our subject, unimportant, changes or

developments. Previous to that time her doctrinal scheme was inchoate, gradually assimilating foreign elements and developing itself step by step, making some notable changes. The supposititious details of the underworld have been definitely arranged in greater subdivision; heaven has been opened for the regular admission of certain souls; the loose notions about purgatory have been completed and consolidated; and the whole combined scheme has been organised as a working instrument of ecclesiastical power and profit.

These changes seem to have been shaped, first, by continual assimilations of Christianity to paganism, both in doctrine and ceremony, to win over the heathen; and, secondly, by modifications and growths to meet the exigencies of doctrinal consistency and practical efficiency, exigencies repeatedly arising from philosophical discussion and political opposition.



*The Crucifixion, early 11th century. Mosaic.
Hosios Loukas, near Distomo.*

The degree in which papal Christianity was conformed to the prejudices and customs of the heathen believers, whose allegiance was sought, is astonishing. It extended to hundreds of particulars, from the most fundamental principles of theological speculation to the most trivial details of ritual service. We shall mention only a few instances of this kind immediately belonging to the subject we are treating. In the first place, the hierophant in the pagan Mysteries and the initiatory rites were the prototypes of the Roman Catholic bishop and the ceremonies under his direction. Christian baptism was made to be the same as the pagan initiation: both were supposed to cleanse from sin and to secure for their subject a better fate in the future life: they were both, therefore, sometimes delayed until just before death. The custom of initiating children into the Mysteries was also common, as became infant baptism. When the public treasury was low, the magistrates sometimes raised a fund by recourse to the initiating fees of the Mysteries, as the Christian popes afterwards collected money from the sale of pardons.

In the second place, the Roman Catholic canonisation was the same as the pagan apotheosis. Among the gentiles, the mass of mankind were supposed to descend to hell at death; but a select few were granted eternal life in heaven, and were thus deified, and worshipped. So the Roman Church taught that nearly all souls passed to the subterranean abodes, but that martyrs and saints were admitted to heaven and might lawfully be prayed to.

The heathen underworld was subdivided into several regions of which different people were disposed to according to their sins. The worst criminals

were in the everlasting penal fire of Tartarus; the best heroes and sages were in the calm meadows of Elysium; the hapless children were detained in the dusky borders outside the grim realm of torture; and there was a purgatorial place where those not too guilty were cleansed from their stains. In a similar manner, the Romanist theologians divided the underworld into four parts: hell for the final abode of the stubbornly wicked; one limbo for the good patriarchs who died before the advent of Christ had made salvation possible, another limbo designed to be the resting place of those children who died unbaptised; and finally a purgatory, in which penitence is offered in agony for unatoned sins committed on earth.



*Christ detached from the Cross also known as
The Courajod Christ, 12th century. Bourgogne.
Painted and gilded maple, 155 x 168 cm,
diameter: 30 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.*



*Adam and Eve Reproached by the Lord
from the Doors of Bishop Bernward,
1015. Bronze panel, 58.3 x 109.3 cm.
Dom St. Mariä Himmelfahrt, Hildesheim.*

Traces of belief in a purgatory appear early among the Christians. Many of the gravest fathers of the first five centuries naturally conceived and taught, as is indeed intrinsically reasonable, that after death some souls will be punished for their sins until they are cleansed, and then will be released from pain. The Manicheans imagined that all souls, before returning to their native heaven, must be borne first to the moon, where with good waters they would be washed pure from outward filth, and then to the sun, where they would be purged by good fires from every inward stain. After these lunar and solar lustrations, they were fit for the eternal world of light. But the conception of purgatory as it was held by the early Christians, whether orthodox Fathers or heretical sects, was merely the just and necessary result of applying to the subject of future punishment the two ethical ideas that punishment should partake of degrees proportioned to guilt, and that it should be restorative. Jeremy Taylor conclusively argues that the prayers for the dead used by the early Christians do not imply any belief in the Papal purgatory. The severity and duration of the sufferings of the dead were not supposed to be in the power of the living, either their relatives or the clergy, but to depend on the moral and physical facts of the case according to justice and necessity, qualified only by the mercy of God.

Pope Gregory the Great, in the 6th century, either borrowing some of the more objectionable features of the purgatory doctrine previously held, or rather, devising the same things himself from a perception of the striking ability of such notions to secure an enviable power to the Church, constructed, established, and gave working efficiency to the dogmatic scheme of purgatory

once defended by the papal adherents as an integral part of the Roman Catholic system. The doctrine, as promulgated by Gregory, granted the representatives of the Church an almost unlimited power over purgatory, which was well received amongst the clergy, yet sank with general conviction into the hopes and fears of the parishioners. The Venerable Bede, in the 8th century, gave a long account of the fully developed doctrine concerning purgatory, hell, Paradise, and heaven. It is narrated in the form of a vision seen by Drithelm, who, in a trance, visits the regions which, on his return, he describes. The account is often viewed as repulsive and closely resembles several well-known descriptions preserved in ancient pagan writings. The Church, seeing the great potential for power this instrument could achieve, left hardly any means untried to enlarge its scale and intensify its operation. Accordingly, from the 9th to the 16th century, no doctrine was so central, prominent, and effective in the common teaching and practice of the Church, no fear was so widely spread and vividly felt in the bosom of Christendom, as the doctrine and the fear of purgatory.

The Romanist theory of man's condition in the future life is this, in brief. By the sin of Adam, heaven was closed against him and all his posterity and the devil acquired a right to shut up their disembodied souls in the underworld. In consequence of the original sin transmitted from Adam, every human being, besides suffering the other woes associated with sin, was helplessly doomed to the underworld after death. In addition to this penalty, each one must also answer for his own personal sins. Christ died to "deliver mankind from sin," "discharge the punishment due them," and "rescue them from the tyranny of the devil." He "descended into the underworld," "subdued the devil," "despoiled the depths," "rescued the Fathers and just souls," and "opened heaven." "Until he rose, heaven was shut against every child of Adam, as it still is to those who die indebted." The surplus balance of merits, together with the values accruing from the superfluous works of the saints and from the Divine sacrifice continually offered anew by the sacrament of the mass, constituted a reserved treasure upon which the Church was authorised to select those in favour. The localities of the future life were these: Limbus Patrum, or the Bosom of Abraham, a place of peace and waiting, where the good went who died before Christ; Limbus Infantum, a mild, palliated hell, where the unbaptised children were sent; purgatory, where all sinners suffer until they are purified, or are redeemed by the Church, or until the last day; hell, or Gehenna, whither the hopelessly wicked have always been condemned; and heaven, where the virtuously good souls have been granted since the ascension of Jesus. At the day of judgment, the few human souls who have reached Paradise, together with the multitudes that crowd the regions of Gehenna, Purgatory, and Limbo, will reassume their bodies: the intermediate states will then be destroyed and when their final sentence is pronounced all will depart forever - the acquitted into heaven, and the condemned into hell. In the meantime, the poor victims of purgatory, by the

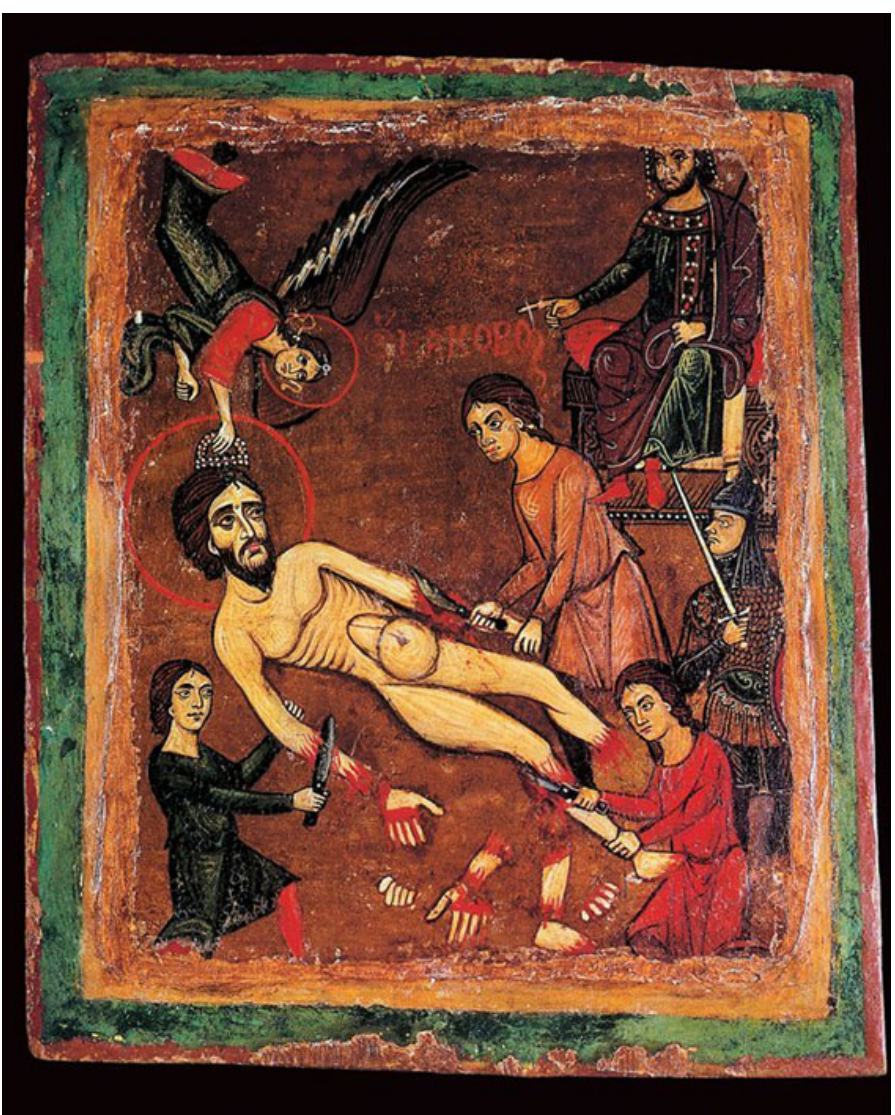
prayers of the living for them, by the transfer of good works to their account, above all, by the celebration of masses in their behalf, may be relieved, rescued, translated to Paradise.

The medieval belief in a future life was predominantly focused on the ideas of Satan, purgatory, the last judgment, and hell. The belief in Christ, God, and heaven, was less practiced at this time. Theologian Johann August Wilhelm Neander expressed, "The inmost distinction of medieval experience was an awful sense of another life and an invisible world." A most piteous illustration of the conjoined faith and fear of that age is furnished by an old dialogue between the "Soul and the Body" edited by Halliwell, an expression of humble trust and crouching horror irresistibly pathetic in its simplicity. A flood of revealing light is given as to the energy with which the doctrine of purgatory impressed itself on the popular mind by two facts, first, that the Council of Auxerre, in 1578, prohibited the administration of the Eucharist to the dead; and, secondly, that in the 11th and 12th centuries "crosses of absolution" that is, crosses cut out of sheet lead, with the formula of absolution engraved on them were quite commonly buried with the dead. The eager sincerity of the medieval belief in another life is attested, too, by connection between the representations of the dead in the legends at the time with the appearance, disposition, and pursuits they had in life. No pure spiritualisation had freed the departed souls from earthly bonds and associations. Light pretexts drew them back to their habitual haunts. A buried treasure allowed them no rest till they had led someone to raise it. An unfinished task or obligation forced them again to the upper world. In ruined castles, the ghosts of knights held tournaments and carousals.

The priest read mass; the hunter pursued his game; the spectre thief fell on the night traveller. It is difficult to reproduce, even in imagination, the fervid and frightful sincerity of the popular faith of the Middle Ages in the ramifying agency of the devil and in the horrors of purgatory. However, the numerous, elaborate depictions of hell and Satan suggest the sheer magnitude of these medieval fears and beliefs.



Röttgen Pietà, c. 1360. Poplar or willow wood and traces of polychromy, 89 x 49.5 cm, height of the pedestal without the plinth: 19 cm.
LVR-LandesMuseum, Bonn.



The Martyr of the Persecuted Saint Jacob,
c. 12th-13th century. Icon, height: 44.5 cm.
Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

First, we may specify the teaching of the Church whose authority in spiritual concerns bore an almost absolute influence over the minds of more than eighteen generations. By the logical subtleties of its scholastic theologians, by the persuasive eloquence of its popular preachers, by the frantic ravings of its fanatic devotees, by the parading proclamation of its innumerable fabricated miracles, by the imposing ceremonies of its dramatic ritual (almost visibly opening heaven and hell to the reverent congregation), by its wonder working use of the relics of martyrs and saints to exorcise

demons from the possessed and to heal the sick, and by its anathemas against all who were supposed to be hostile to its formulas, the Church infused the ideas of her doctrinal system into the hearts and minds of the common people, nourishing the collateral horrors, until every wave of its wand tormented the world.

A tremendous impulse, vivifying and emphasising the eschatological notions of the time, an impulse whose effects did not cease when it died, was imparted by that frightful epidemic expectation of the impending end of the world which universally prevailed in Christendom around the year 1000. Many of the charters given at that time commence with the words, "As the world is now drawing to a close." This expectation drew additional strength from the harsh realities of the times, the unutterable sufferings, famine, oppression, pestilence, war, and superstition that civilians commonly faced. "The idea of the end of the world," we quote from Michelet, "sad as that world was, was at once the hope and the terror of the Middle Age". The antique statues of the 10th and 11th centuries encapsulate the horrors of the Middle Ages, the gaunt and rigid features give of an expression of suffering perhaps associated with repulsive nature of death. They implore, with clasped hands, that desired yet dreaded moment when the resurrection shall redeem them from their unspeakable sorrows and raise them from nothingness into existence and from the grave to God.

Furthermore, in addition to the fear associated with this period of time, the superstitious character of the medieval belief was also a result of the credulous nature of the civilians. It was an age of marvels, romances, and fears. While congregations knelt in awe beneath the divine power, and the image of the dying Saviour stretched on the cross glimmered through clouds of incense, perhaps an army of flagellants would march by the cathedral, shouting, "The end of the world is at hand!" filling the streets with the echoes of their torture as they lashed their naked backs with knotted cords wet with blood; and no soul but must shudder with the infection of horror as the dreadful notes of the "Dies Irae" (the renowned Latin hymn proclaiming the Day of Judgement) went sounding through the air. The narratives of the desert Fathers, the miracles wrought in convent cells, the visions of pillar saints, the thrilling accompaniments of the Crusades, and other kindred influences, made the world a perpetual mirage. The devil stood before every tempted man, ghosts walked in valleys at night. Ghastly armies were seen contending where the aurora borealis hung out its bloody banners. The Huns under Attila that ravaged southern Europe were thought to be literal demons who had made an eruption from the pit. The metaphysician was in peril of the stake as a heretic, the natural philosopher as a magician. A belief in witchcraft and a trust in ordeals were universal, even from Pope Eugenius, who introduced the trial by cold water, and King James, who wrote volumes on magic, to the humblest monk who shuddered when passing the church crypt and the simplest peasant who quaked in his homeward path at seeing a will o' the wisp. As a vivid

writer elucidated, "A gloomy mist of credulity enwrapped the cathedral and the hall of justice, the cottage and the throne. In the dank shadows of the universal ignorance a thousand superstitions, like foul animals of night, were propagated and nourished."

The beliefs of the medieval period assumed an epidemic character, diffusing and working like a contagion. There were mass-pilgrimages to famous shrines and immense crowds in the localities of popular legends, relics, or special grace. In the magnetic sphere of such a fervid and credulous multitude, filled with the interaction of enthusiasm, of course prodigies would abound, fables would flourish, and faith would be zealously sustained.

Nothing tends more to strengthen any given belief than to see it universally carried into practice - which was the case with the medieval doctrine of the future life. Its applications and results were constantly exhibited by the sale of indulgences and the launching of excommunications. Early in the 9th century, Charlemagne complained that the bishops and abbots were involved in illicit expropriation of civilian property. The rival mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, acquired great riches and power by the exchange of indulgences. They even had the impudence to affirm that the members of their orders were privileged above all other men in the next world.



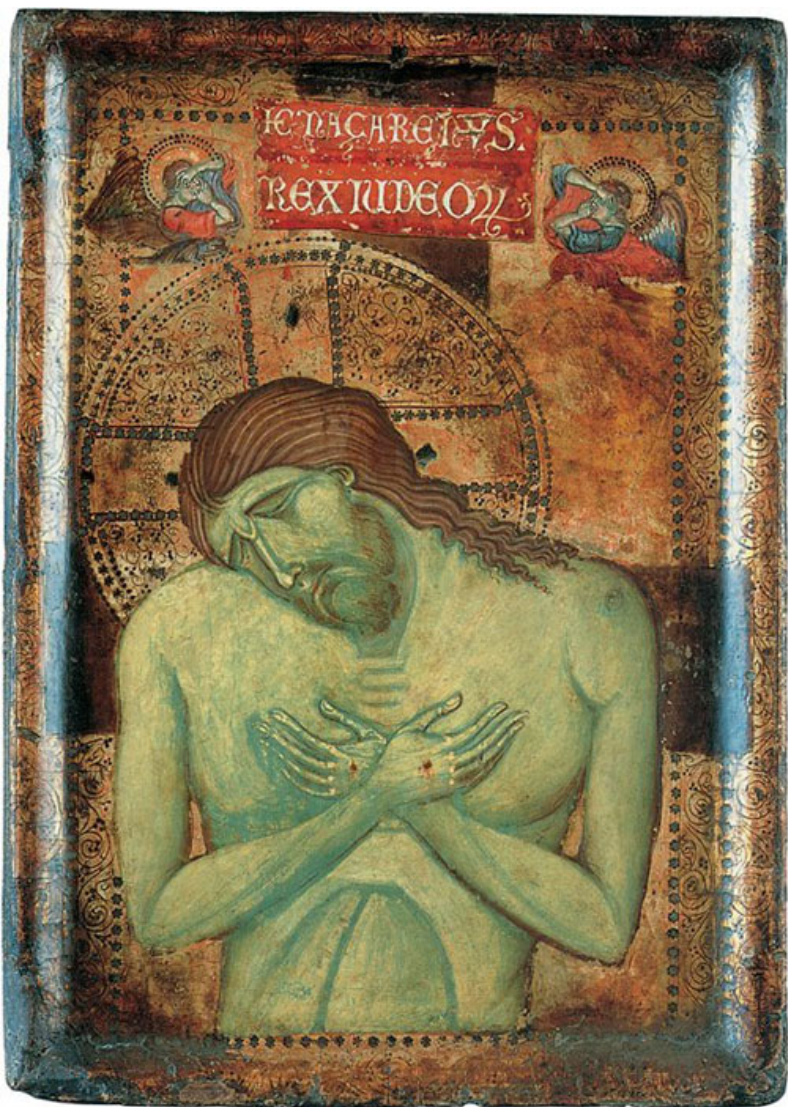
Giotto di Bondone *The Lamentation of Christ*, 1305.
Fresco. Scrovegni Arena Chapel, Padua.

The Council of Basel censured the claim of the Franciscan monks that their founder annually descended to purgatory and escorted to heaven the souls of those who had belonged to his order. The Carmelites also asserted that the Virgin Mary appeared to Simon Stockius, the general of their order, and gave him a solemn promise that the souls who left the world with the Carmelite scapular upon their shoulders should be infallibly preserved from eternal damnation.

However the topic of the medieval doctrine of future life cannot be complete without discussing Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, one of the most prominent explorations of the Christian afterlife. Whoso with adequate insight and sympathy peruses the pages of the immortal Florentine at whom the people pointed as he walked the streets, and said, "There goes the man who has been in hell" will not fail to perceive with what a profound sincerity the popular breast shuddered responsive to ecclesiastical threats and purgatorial woes.

The tremendous moral power of this solitary work lies in the fact that it is

a series of terrific and fascinating representations, embodying the idea of unyielding poetic justice impartially administered upon king and valet, pope and beggar, oppressor and victim, projected amidst the unalterable necessities of eternity, and moving through the lurid abyss with an intense distinctness that captures the reader. Given that the medieval belief in future life viewed the Day of Judgment as its predominant fear, *The Divine Comedy* served as a very relevant text. With astounding accuracy, it reflected the feeling of the age when it was written in this respect. Its depictions of purgatory and hell illustrated both a grappling force of attraction and a compelling realism.



Attributed to an **Umbrian Master**, *Man of Sorrows*,
c. 1260. Egg tempera on wood, 32.4 x 22.8 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



Attributed to an **Unknown Italian Master of 1333**,
*Triptych: The Crucifixion surmounted by the Coronation of
 the Virgin (centre panel), The Angel of the Annunciation;
 The Virgin of Mercy; Saint Marguerite, Saint Catherine and
 One Saint (left panel), The Virgin of the Annunciation; The Nativity;
 Three Martyr Saints (right panel), 1333. Wood, 135 x 73 cm (centre panel),
 127 x 36 cm (left and right panels). Musée du Louvre, Paris.*

The principal works of art at the time also encompassed the medieval doctrine of future life. Such works, gazed on day after day, while multitudes were kneeling beneath in the shadowy aisles, and clouds of incense were floating above, and the organ was pealing and the choir chanting in full accord, must have produced lasting effects on the imagination, and thus contribute in return to the faith and fear which inspired them. The Last Judgment was a subject that during the Middle Ages was commonly painted on the west end of churches, and was treated in a highly symbolical manner. Such a subject would empty most churches, if so painfully called to notice today. Christ was usually represented on the upper part of the wall, seated on a rainbow, displaying his wounds, and sometimes holding a sharp two-edged sword in His mouth, in allusion to the Vision in the Revelation. The Blessed Virgin and St. John Baptist kneel on either side. The great archangels blowing the trumpets and the lesser angels go forth from Christ and separate the good from the evil. Devils claim the wicked and thrust them into the gaping mouth

of hell, from which flames issue, while the just are led in the embraces of the angels to a Paradise of Beauty. The inmost thought or sentiment of medieval was the representation of the misery of the human body and the elevation of the soul. Statues of martyrs, pictures of crucifixions, dying saints, pale, faint sufferers, drooping heads, long, thin arms, meager bones, poor, awkwardly hung dresses, emaciated features celestially illuminated by faith and love, expressed the Christian self denial and unearthliness. Architecture enforced the same lesson as sculpture and painting. Entering a cathedral, we at once feel the soul exalted, the flesh degraded. The inside of the dome is itself a hollow cross, and we walk there within the very witness work of martyrdom. The gorgeous windows fling their red and green lights upon us like drops of blood and decay. Funereal music wails and fades away along the dim arches. Under our feet are gravestones and corruption. With the colossal columns the soul climbs aloft, detaching itself from the body, which sinks to the floor like a feeble weed. These vast Gothic structures appear as ethereal works of art; airy, graceful and towering.

One active and mighty cause of the dreadful faith and fear with which the Middle Ages contemplated the future life was the innumerable and frightful woes, crimes, tyrannies, instruments of torture, engines of persecution, and insane superstitions, which were present at the time. Working in alliance with the foregoing forces of superstition was the powerful influence of the various forms of insanity which remarkably abounded in the Middle Ages. The insane person, it was believed, was possessed by a demon. His ravings, his narratives, were eagerly credited; and they were usually full of infernal visions, diabolical interviews, encounters with apparitions, and everything that would naturally arise in a deranged and preternaturally sensitive mind from the chief conceptions then current concerning the invisible world. Life signified a living hell, the misery and cruelty of the world were enough to generate frightful beliefs and cast appalling shadows over the future. If the earth was full of devils and phantoms, surely hell must be a horrifying extension of this existence. The Inquisition sat shrouded and enthroned in supernatural obscurity of cunning and awfulness of power, and thrust its invisible daggers everywhere. The flaming stakes of an *Auto da Fe* around which the victims of ecclesiastical hatred struggled with were but faint emblems of the doom that awaited their souls in the realm of demons of which the 'tender' mercies of the Church consigned them. Indeed, the fate of myriads of heretics and traitors could not fail to project the lurid vision of hell with all its paraphernalia into the imaginations of the people of the Dark Age. The glowing lava of purgatory heated the soil they trod, and a smell of its sulphur surcharged the air. A stupendous revelation of terror, bearing whole volumes of direful meaning, was a result of the common belief of that period that the holy inquisitors would sit with Christ on the Day of Judgment. If king or noble took offence at some bold servant or serf, he simply ordered him to be secretly buried in the cell of some secluded fortress, and the individual was

forgotten. Therefore, if pope or priest hated or feared some stubborn thinker, he straightway, "Would banish him to wear a burning chain In the great dungeons of the unforgiven, Beneath the space deep castle walls of heaven." It was an age of cruelty, never to be restored, when the world was boiling in tempest and men rode on the crests of fear.

Research made within the last century among the remains of famous medieval edifices, both ecclesiastic and state, have brought to light the dismal records of forgotten horrors. Several royal palaces, priestly buildings, and baronial castles, contained secret chambers full of infernal machinery designed for inflicting torture, and under them concealed trapdoors opening into dungeons with no outlet and whose floors were covered with the decaying bones of unfortunate individuals who had mysteriously disappeared long ago and perished there. Sometimes these trap doors were directly above profound pits of water, in which the victim would drown as they were dropped from the mangling hooks, racks, and pincers of the torture chamber. There were horrible rumours circling during the Middle Ages surrounding a machine called the "iron maiden"-a torture contraption that enclosed the victim and pierced them with several sharp spikes. However concrete evidence of these machines is virtually non-existent, suggesting that its existence may have been merely a fable.

Ignorance and alarm in an age of suffering and darkness, surrounded by sounds of superstition and sights of cruelty, fostered a horrid depiction of the invisible world. Accordingly, the common doctrine of the future life prevailing in Christendom from the 9th century till the 16th was as we have portrayed it. Of course there are exceptions to be admitted and qualifications to be made; but, upon the whole, the picture is loyal. Fortunately, humankind couldn't rest forever, and the medieval nightmares were not eternal, always keep their torturing seat on the bosom of humanity. Noble men arose to vindicate the rights of reason and the divinity of conscience. The world was circumnavigated, and its revolution around the sun was demonstrated. A thousand truths were discovered, a thousand inventions introduced. Papacy tottered, its prestige waned, its infallibility sunk. The light of knowledge shone, the simplicity of nature was seen, and the benignity of God was surmised. Thought, throwing off many restrictions and accumulating much material, began to grow free, and began to grow wise. And so, before the calm, steady gaze of enlightened and cheerful reason, the live and crawling smoke of hell, which had so long enwreathed the mind of the time with its pendent and breathing horrors, gradually broke up and dissolved, "Like a great superstitious snake, uncurled From the pale temples of the awakening world."



Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgement* (one of 35 paintings for the Silver Treasury of the Santissima Annunziata), c. 1450. Tempera on wood panel, 39 x 78 cm. Museo di San Marco, Florence.



Master René of Anjou, *The Figure of Death*
Wearing the King's Crown (Hours of René of Anjou),
 Egeton Ms. 1020 fol.53, c. 1422-1443.
 Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

*There is a Period set for every State,
 Every Affair must finish, small or great
 A Time for Birth, a Time to Die,
 For Loving and for Enmity,
 A Time to Seek, a Time to Lose,
 Time to Embrace and to Refuse,
 A Time to Mend and Rend in twain,
 To Plant and to Root up again,
 To Pull down and to Mend the Breach,*

*To Kill, to Heal, a Time for each,
A Time to Gather and to Squander,
A Time for Speech, a Time to Ponder,
A Time to Drop, a Time to Keep,
A Time to Laugh, a Time to Weep,
A Time for Mourning and for Mirth,
War-Times and Times of Peace on Earth”-
What Gain has then the Worker of his own
For toiling at his Work early and late?*

*This is the Trouble God has given to Men:
He made all things fair in their Season; then
A Sense of Time He gave to us, yet kept
The Vision of the Whole outside our Ken
Right well I know there is no better Way
Than cheerfully to do what Good one may,
But to enjoy the Fruit of Labour done
That is God's Gift, not given every day
Aye, what God wills, that stands for ever fast,
The Cotirse of things will go on to the last,
Man cannot add to it or take away;
God makes the Future as He made the Past
His Purpose lies beyond our Praise or Blame,
What has been ever will remain the same;
Let us then reverence the Unsearchable
He will take care to carry out His Aim*

*God's Aim how difficult it is to trace!
I've seen Rogues sitting in the Judge's place,
The Bad man sits where Righteousness should be,
And Merit stands before him in Disgrace,
God lets the Wicked flourish; no doubt He
Will judge them justly, but it seems to me
That He has made Men for Experiment
To try what kind of Animals they be
For one Event comes both to Man and Beast,
There's no Distinction when the Breath has ceased;
As one dies, so the other, Bubbles both,
And Man nowise superior in the least
Who knows the Breath of Man is upward bound,
While the Beast's Breath sinks downward to the Ground?
Out of the Dust we came, to Dust we go;
All things return to tread the unchanging Round.*

The Book of Ecclesiastes: Chapter III, Lines 1-22



**Domenico di Michelino, Nave of the Duomo of Florence:
Dante and the Divine Comedy, 1465.**
Fresco, 232 x 290 cm. Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence.

INFERNO

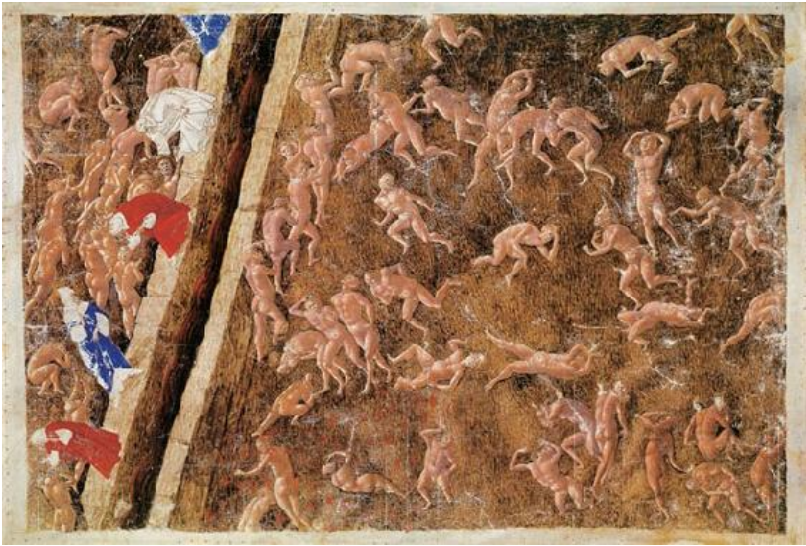
CANTO I.

*In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray
Gone from the path direct: and e'en to tell,
It were no easy task, how savage wild
That forest, how robust and rough its growth,
Which to remember" only, my dismay
Renews, in bitterness not far from death.
Yet, to discourse of what there good befell,
All else will I relate discover'd there.
How first I enter'd it I scarce can say,
Such sleepy dulness in that instant weigh'd
My senses down, when the true path I left;
But when a mountain's foot I reach'd, where closed
The valley that had pierced my heart with dread,
I look'd aloft, and saw his shoulders broad
Already vested with that planet's beam,
Who leads all wanderers safe through every way.
Then was a little respite to the fear,
That in my heart's recesses' deep had lain
All of that night, so pitifully past:
And as a man, with difficult short breath,*

Forespent with toiling, 'scaped from sea to shore,
Turns to the perilous wide waste, and stands
At gaze; e'en so my spirit, that yet fail'd,
Struggling with terror, turn'd to view the straits
That none hath past and lived. My weary frame
After short pause re-comforted, again
I journey'd on over that lonely steep,
The hinder foot still firmer. Scarce the ascent
Began, when, lo! a panther, nimble, light,
And cover'd with a Speckled skin, appear'd;
Nor, when it saw me, vanish'd; rather strove
To check my onward going; that oftentimes,
With purpose to retrace my steps, I turn'd.
The hour was morning's prime, and on his way
Aloft the sun ascended with those stars
That with him rose when Love divine first moved
Those its fair works: so that with joyous hope
All things conspired to fill me, the gay skin
Of that swift animal, the matin dawn,
And the sweet season. Soon that joy was chased.
And by new dread succeeded, when in view
A lion came, 'gainst me as it appear'd.
With his head held aloft and hunger-mad,
That e'en the air was fear-struck. A she-wolf
Was at his heels, who in her leanness seem'd
Full of all wants, and many a land hath made
Disconsolate ere now. She with such fear
O'erwhelm'd me, at the sight of her appall'd,
That of the height all hope I lost. As one
Who, with his gain elated, sees the time
When all unwares is gone, he inwardly
Mourns with heart-gripping anguish; such was I,
Haunted by that fell beast, never at peace,
Who coming o'er against me, by degrees
Impell'd me where the sun in silence rests.
While to the lower space with backward step
I fell, my ken discern 'd the form of one
Whose voice seem'd faint through long disuse of speech.
When him in that great desert I espied,
"Have mercy on me," cried I out aloud,
"Spirit! or living man! whate'er thou be."
He answer'd: "Now not man, man once I was,
And born of Lombard parents, Mantuans both
By country, when the power of Julius yet
Was scarcely firm. At Rome my life was past,
Beneath the mild Augustus, in the time
Of fabled deities and false. A bard
Was I, and made Anchises' upright son
The subject of my song, who came from Troy,
When the flames prey'd on Ilium's haughty towers.
But thou, say wherefore to such perils past
Return 'st thou? wherefore not this pleasant mount
Ascendest, cause and source of all delight?"
"And art thou then that Virgil, that well-spring,
From which such copious floods of eloquence
Have issued?" I with front abash'd replied.
"Glory and light of all the tuneful train I
May it avail me, that I long with zeal
Have sought thy volume, and with love immense

*Have conn'd it o'er. My master thou, and guide I'
Thou he from whom alone I have derived
That style, which for its beauty into fame
Exalts me. See the beast, from whom I fled.
Oh, save me from her, thou illustrious sage!*

— *Canto I, Lines 1-76*



Sandro Botticelli, *Illustration from the Canto XV,*
from Dante's Inferno, c. 1490.
 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

INFERNO

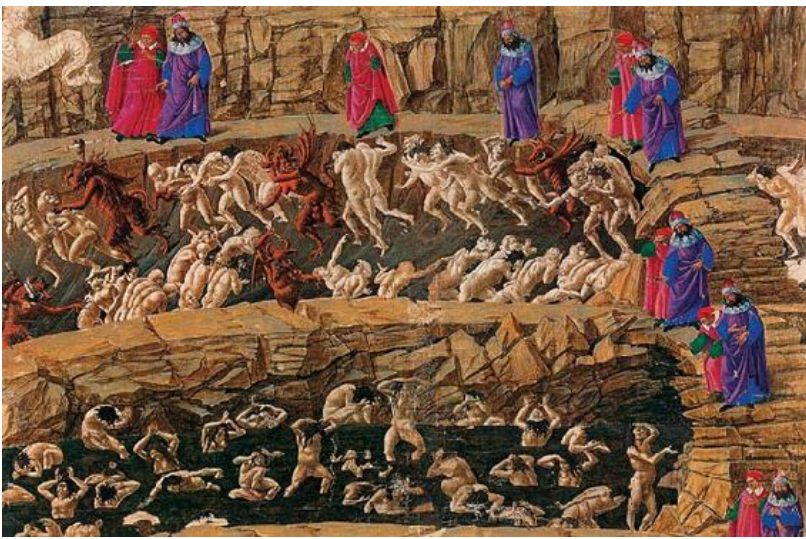
CANTO XV

ONE of the solid margins bears us now
Envelop'd in the mist, that, from the stream
Arising, hovers o'er, and saves from fire
Both piers and water. As the Flemings rear
Their mound, 'twixt Ghent and Bruges, to chase back
The ocean, fearing his tumultuous tide
That drives toward them; or the Paduans theirs
Along the Brenta, to defend their towns
And castles, ere the genial warmth be felt
On Chiarentana's top; such were the mounds,
So framed, though not in height or bulk to these
Made equal, by the master, whosoe'er
He was, that raised them here. We from the wood
Were now so far removed, that turning round
I might not have discern 'd it, when we met
A troop of spirits, who came beside the pier.
They each one eyed us, as at eventide
One eyes another under a new moon;
And toward us sharpen'd their sight, as keen
As an old tailor at his needle's eye.
Thus narrowly explored by all the tribe,
I was agnised of one, who by the skirt
Caught me, and cried, "What wonder have we here?"
And I, when he to me outstretch'd his arm,
Intently fix'd my ken on his parch'd looks,

That, although smirch'd with fire, they hinder'd not
But I remember'd him; and towards his face
My hand inclining, answer'd: "Ser Brunetto!
And are ye here?" He thus to me: "My son I
Oh, let it not displease thee, if Brunetto
Latini but a little space with thee
Turn back, and leave his fellows to proceed."
I thus to him replied: "Much as I can,
I thereto pray thee; and if thou be willing
That I here seat me with thee, I consent ;
His leave, with whom I journey, first obtain'd."
"Oh, son!" said he, "whoever of this throng
One instant stops, lies then a hundred years.
No fan to ventilate him, when the fire
Smites sorest. Pass thou therefore on. I close
Will at thy garments walk, and then rejoin
My troop, who go mourning their endless doom."
I dared not from the path descend to tread
On equal ground with him, but held my head
Bent down, as one who walks in reverent guise.
"What chance or destiny," thus he began,
"Ere the last day, conduces thee here below?
And who is this that shows to thee the way?"
"There up aloft," I answer'd,
in the life Serene, I wander'd in a valley lost,
Before mine age' had to its fulness reach'd.
But yester-morn I left it: then once more
Into that vale returning, him I met;
And by this path homeward he leads me back."
"If thou," he answer'd,
"follow but thy star,
Thou canst not miss at last a glorious haven;
Unless in fairer days my judgment err'd.
And if my fate so early had not chanced,
Seeing the heavens thus bounteous to thee, I
Had gladly given thee comfort in thy work.
But that ungrateful and malignant race,
Who in old times came down from Fesole,
Ay and still smack of their rough mountain-flint,
Will for thy good deeds show thee enmity.
Nor wonder; for amongst ill-savour'd crabs
It suits not the sweet fig-tree lay her fruit.
Old fame reports them in the world for blind,
Covetous, envious, proud. Look to it well:
Take heed thou cleanse thee of their ways. For thee,
Thy fortune hath such honour in reserve.
That thou by either party shalt be craved
With hunger keen: but be the fresh herb far
From the goat's tooth. The herd of Fesole
May of themselves make litter, not touch the plant,
If any such yet spring on their rank bed.
In which the holv seed revives, transmitted
From those true Romans, who still there remain'd,
When it was made the nest of so much ill."
"Were all my wish fulfill'd," I straight replied,
"Thou from the confines of man's nature yet
Hadst not been driven forth ; for in my mind
Is fix'd, and now strikes full upon my heart,
The dear, benign, paternal image, such

*As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me
The way for man to win eternity:
And how I prized the lesson, it behoves.
That, long as life endures, my tongue should speak.*

—*Canto XV lines 1-86*



Sandro Botticelli, Illustration from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:
The City of Dis, the lower part of Hell, with winged monsters,
and the Circle of Deceivers, (*Inferno*, XVII), c. 1490.
Staaliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

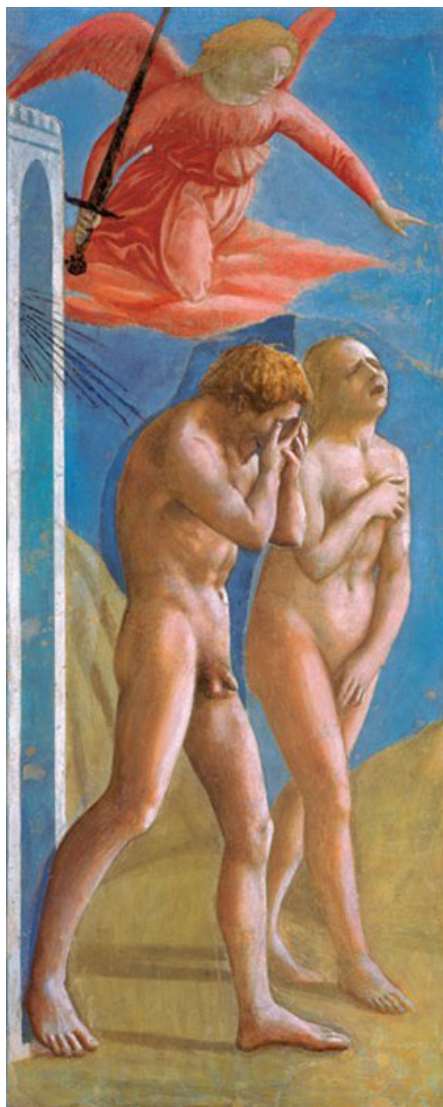
CANTO XVIII

There is a place within the depths of hell
 Call'd Malebolge, all of rock dark-stain'd
 With hue ferruginous, e'en as the steep
 That round it circling winds. Right in the midst
 Of that abominable region yawns
 A spacious gulf profound, whereof the frame
 Due time shall tell. The circle, that remains,
 Throughout its round, between the gulf and base
 Of the high craggy banks, successive forms
 Ten bastions, in its hollow bottom raised.
 As where, to guard the walls, full many a fosse
 Begirds some stately castle, sure defence'
 Affording to the space within; so here
 Were modell'd these: and as like fortresses.
 E'en from their threshold to the brink without.
 Are flank'd with bridges; from the rock's low base
 Thus flinty paths advanced, that 'cross the moles
 And dikes struck onward far as to the gulf.
 That in one bound collected cuts them off.
 Such was the place, wherein we found ourselves
 From Geryon's back dislodged. The bard to left
 Held on his way, and I behind him moved.
 On our right hand new misery I saw,
 New pains, new executioners of wrath,
 That swarming peopled the first chasm. Below
 Were naked sinners. Hitherward they came,
 Meeting our faces, from the middle point;

With us beyond,' but with a larger stride.
E'en thus the Romans, when the year returns
Of Jubilee, with better speed to rid
The thronging multitudes, their means devise
For such as pass the bridge; that on one side
All front toward the castle, and approach
Saint Peter's fane, on the other towards the mount.
Each diverse way, along the grisly rock,
Horn'd demons I beheld, with lashes huge,
That on their back unmercifully smote.
Ah I how they made them bound at the first stripe
None for the second waited, nor the third.
Meantime, as on I pass'd, one met my sight.
Whom soon as view'd, "Of him," cried I, "not yet
Mine eye hath had his fill." I therefore stay'd
My feet to scan him, and the teacher kind
Paused with me, and consented I should walk
Backward a space; and the tormented spirit,
Who thought to hide him, bent his visage down.
But it avail'd him nought; for I exclaim'd:
"Thou who doth cast thine eye upon the ground.
Unless thy features do belie thee much.
Venedico art thou. But what brings thee
Into this bitter seasoning" He replied:
"Unwillingly I answer to thy words.
But thy clear speech, that to my mind recalls
The world I once inhabited, constrains me.
Know then 'twas I who led fair Ghisola
To do the Marquis' will, however fame
The shameful tale have bruited. Nor alone
Bologna hither sendeth me to mourn.
Rather with us the place is so o'erthrong'd,
That not so many tongues this day are taught,
Betwixt the Reno and Savena's stream,
To answer Sip'a in their country's phrase.
And if of that securer proof thou need,
Remember but our craving thirst for gold."
Him speaking thus, a demon with his thong
Struck and exclaim'd, "Away, corrupter! here
Women are none for sale" Forthwith I join'd
My escort, and few paces thence we came
To where a rock forth issued from the bank.
That easily ascended, to the right
Upon its splinter turning, we depart
From those eternal barriers. When arrived
Where, underneath, the gaping arch lets pass
The scourged souls. "Pause here," the teacher said,
"And let these others miserable now
Strike on thy ken; faces not yet beheld.
For that together they with us have walk'd."
From the old bridge we eyed the pack, who came
From the other side toward us, like the rest,
Excoriate from the lash. My gentle guide,
By me unquestion'd, thus his speech resumed:
"Behold that lofty shade, who this way tends,
And seems too woe-begone to drop a tear.
How yet the regal aspect he retains I
Jason is he, whose skill and prowess won
The ram from Colchos. To the Lemnian isle

*His passage thither led him, when those bold
And pitiless women had slain all their males.
There he with tokens and fair witching words
Hypsipyle' beguiled, a virgin young.
Who first had all the rest herself beguiled.*

Dante's Inferno, Canto XVIII, lines 1-88



Masaccio (Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone),

The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden,

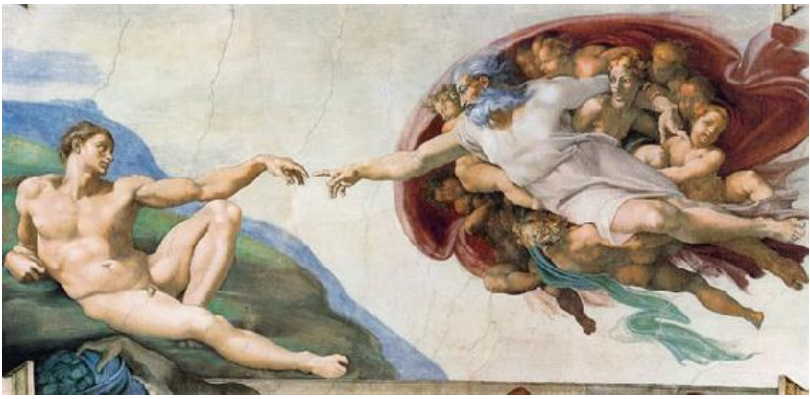
1426-1427. Fresco, 208 x 88 cm.

Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria della Carmine, Florence.

*Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That Shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth*

*Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou knowst; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the highth of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.*

— John Milton,
excerpt from **Paradise Lost**: Book I, Lines 1-26



Michaelangelo, *The Creation of Adam*
(sixth panel of the vault), circa 1510.
Fresco, 280 x 570 cm. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.



Andrea Mantegna, *St Sebastian*, c. 1470-1475.
Tempera on wood, 68 x 30 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Modern Doctrine of Future Life

The idiocy and paganism of some of the Church dogmas, the avaricious nature of its spirit, the tyranny of its rule, and the immoral character of many of its practices, had often awakened the indignant protests and the determined opposition of men of enlightened minds, vigorous consciences, and generous hearts. Many such men, vainly struggling to purify the Church from its

iniquitous errors, or to relieve mankind from its outrageous burdens, had been silenced and crushed by its relentless might. Arnold, Wickliffe, Wessel, Savonarola, and many others, are to be gratefully remembered forever as the heroic yet unsuccessful forerunners of the powerful monk of Wittenberg. The corruption of the medieval Church grew worse, and eventually caused extensive disgust and revulsion. Wholesale pardons for all their sins were granted indiscriminately to those who accepted the terms of the papal officials; while every independent thinker, however evangelical his faith and exemplary his character, was hopelessly doomed to hell. Particularly the pardons given to pilgrims and to the Crusaders, Bernard of Clairvaux, exhorting the people to undertake a new Crusade, claimed that "God condescends to invite into his service murderers, robbers, adulterers, perjurers, and those sunk in other crimes; and whosoever falls in this cause shall secure pardon for the sins which he has never confessed with contrite heart." Ecclesiasticism devoured ethics; allegiance to morality was exchanged for devotion to a ritual. The sale of indulgences at length became too impudent and blasphemous to be continued, when John Tetzel, a Dominican monk, travelled through Europe, and, setting up his auction block in the churches, offered for sale those famous indulgences of Leo x which promised to everyone rich enough to pay the requisite price, remission of all sins. This bold but authorised charlatan boasted that "he had saved more souls from hell by the sale of indulgences than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching." He also said that "even if anyone had ravished the Mother of God he could sell him a pardon for it!" Martin Luther counteracted this with his *Ninety-Five Theses* which led to the Protestant Reformation. This great movement produced, in relation to subject of future life, three important results that will be discussed in detail. It noticeably modified the practice and the popular preaching of the Roman Catholic Church.

The dogmas of the Romanist theology remained as they were before. But a marked change took place in the public conduct of the papal functionaries. Morality was made more prominent and mere ritualism less obtrusive. Comparatively speaking, an emphasis was taken away from ecclesiastic confession and indulgence, and laid upon ethical obedience and piety. The Council of Trent, held at this time, says in its decree concerning indulgences, "In granting indulgences, the Church desires that moderation be observed, lest, by excessive facility, ecclesiastical discipline be enervated." Imposture became more cautious, threats less frequent and less terrible; the teeth of persecution were somewhat blunted; miracles grew rarer; the insufferable glare of purgatory and hell faded, and the open traffic in forgiveness of sins, or the compounding for deficiencies, diminished. But among the more ignorant papal multitudes the medieval superstition still maintained its position. "Heaven and hell are as much a part of the Italian's geography as the Adriatic and the Apennines; the Queen of Heaven looks on the streets as clear as the morning star; and the souls in purgatory are more readily present to

conception than the political prisoners immured in the dungeons of Venice.”

A second consequence of the Reformation was the numerous dissenting sects which resulted in its rise. The chief peculiarities of the Protestant doctrines of the future life are embodied in the four leading denominations commonly known as Lutheran, Calvinistic, Unitarian, and Universalist. Each of these includes a number of subordinate parties bearing distinctive names, (such as Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, etc.). The Lutheran formula delineates that through the sacrifice of Christ, salvation is offered to all who will accept it by sincere faith.

The Calvinistic formula is that heaven is attainable only for those whom the arbitrary predestination of God has elected; all others are irretrievably damned. Calvin was the first Christian theologian who succeeded in giving the fearful doctrine of unconditional election and reprobation a place in popular beliefs. The Roman Catholic Church had earnestly repudiated it. Goteschalk was condemned and died in prison for advocating it, in the 9th century. But Calvin's character enabled him to believe it, and his talents and position gave great weight to his advocacy, and it has since been widely received. Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, all agreed in the general proposition that by sin physical death came into the world, heaven was shut against man, and all men utterly lost. They differed only in some unessential details concerning the condition of that lost state. They also agreed in the general proposition that Christ came, by his incarnation, death, descent to hell, resurrection, and ascension, to redeem men from their lost state. They only differed in regard to the precise grounds and extent of that redemption. The Catholic said: Christ's atonement abolished the idea of original sin, and thus enabled man to attain heaven by moral fidelity and the help of the Church. The Lutheran said: Christ's atonement made all the sins of those who have faith pardonable. The Calvinist said: God foresaw that man would fall and incur damnation, and Christ's atonement allowed the predestined salvation of the chosen few. Furthermore, Lutherans and Calvinists, in all their varieties, agree with the Romanist in asserting that Christ shall come again, the dead be raised bodily, a universal judgment be held, and that the condemned shall sink into the everlasting fire of hell, and the accepted rise into the endless bliss of heaven.

The Socinian doctrine relative to the future fate of man differed from the preceding ideas. First, it limited the redeeming mission of Christ to the enlightening influences of the truths in which he proclaimed with divine authority, the moral power of his perfect example, and the poignant motives exhibited by his death. Secondly, it illustrated the natural ability in every man to live a life conformed to right, reason and sound morality, and promised heaven to all who obediently followed the pattern of Christ. Thirdly, it declared that the wicked, after suffering excruciating agonies, would be annihilated. Respecting the second coming of Christ, a physical resurrection of the dead, and a day of judgment, the Socinians agreed with the other sects.

However their doctrine scarcely corresponds with Unitarian theology, Unitarian opposition from the popular theology is much more fundamental, detailed, and consistent than that of the Socinian.

The Universalist formula, claiming that every soul created by God shall sooner or later be saved from sin and woe and inherit everlasting happiness, has been publicly defended in every age of the Christian Church. It was first publicly condemned as a heresy at the very close of the 4th century. It ranks among its defenders the names of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, and several other prominent Fathers. Universalism has been held in four forms, on four grounds. First, it has been supposed that Christ died for all, and by infinite efficacy of his redeeming merits, all sins shall be cancelled and every soul be saved. This was the scheme of those early Universalist Christians whom Epiphanius condemns as heretics. Secondly, it has been thought that each person would be punished in the future state according to the deeds done in the body, each sin be expiated by a proportionate amount of suffering, the retribution of some souls being severe and long, that of others light and brief; but, every penalty being at length exhausted, the last victim would be restored. This was the notion of Origen, the basis of the doctrine of purgatory, and the view of most of the Restorationists. Thirdly, it has been imagined that, by the good pleasure and fixed laws of God, all men are destined to an impartial, absolute, and instant salvation beyond the grave: all sins are justly punished, all moral distinctions equitably compensated, in this life; in the future an equal glory awaits all men, by the gracious and eternal election of God, as revealed to us in the benignant mission of Christ. This is the peculiar conception distinguishing some members of the denomination now known as Universalists. Finally, it has been believed that the freedom and probation granted here extend into the life to come; that the aim of all future punishment will be remedial, beneficent, not revengeful; that stronger motives will be applied for producing repentance, and grander attractions to holiness be felt; and that thus, at some time or other, even the most sunken and hardened souls will be regenerated and raised up to heaven in the image of God. Almost all Universalists, most Unitarians, and a large number of individual Christians outwardly affiliated with other denominations, now accept and cherish this theory.

While exploring the Protestant views of the future life, it is imperative to examine the remarkable doctrine on that subject published by Emanuel Swedenborg. His works "Heaven and Hell," "Heavenly Arcana," "Doctrine of Influx," and "True Christian Religion," contain manifold statements and abundant illustrations that pertain to this subject. We shall merely attempt to present a brief synopsis of the essential principles, accompanied by two or three suggestions of criticism.

Swedenborg conceives man to be an organised receptacle of truth and love from God. Man represents an imperishable spiritual body placed for a season of probation in a perishable material body. Every moment receiving the

essence of his being afresh from God, and returning it through the fruition of its uses devoutly rendered in conscious obedience and joyous worship, he is at once a medium of the divine. The will is the power of man's life, and the understanding is its form. When the will is disinterested, love and understanding is celestial truth, then man fulfils the end of his being, and his home is heaven; he is a spirit frame into which the goodness of God perpetually flows, is humbly acknowledged, gratefully enjoyed, and piously returned. But when his will is hatred or selfishness and his understanding is falsehood or evil, then his powers are abused, his destiny inverted, and his fate hell. While in the body in this world, he is placed in freedom, on probation, between these two alternatives.



Hans Memling, *Vanity*, detail from the *Triptych of Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation* (centre panel), c. 1485.
Oil on wood, 22 x 14 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg.



Michelangelo, *La Pietà*, 1499. Marble,
174 x 195 cm. St Peter's Cathedral, Vatican City.

The Swedenborgian universe is divided into four orders of abodes. In the highest or celestial world are the heavens of the angels. In the lowest or infernal world are the hells of the demons. In the intermediate or spiritual world are the earths inhabited by men, and surrounded by the transition state through which souls, escaping from their bodies, after a while soar to heaven or sink to hell, according to their merit. In this life, man is free because he symbolises a force of energy in equilibrium between the influences of heaven and hell. The middle state surrounding man is full of spirits, some good and some evil. Now, there are two kinds of influx into man. Mediate influx is when the spirits in the middle state flow into man's thoughts and affections. The good spirits are in communication with heaven, and they carry what is

good and true; the evil spirits are in communication with hell, and they carry what is evil and false. Between these opposed and reacting agencies man is in an equilibrium whose essence is freedom. Deciding for himself, if he turns with embracing welcome to the good spirits, he is thereby placed and lives in conjunction with heaven; but if he turns, on the contrary, with predominant love to the bad spirits, he is placed in conjunction with hell. From heaven, therefore, through the good spirits, all the elements of saving goodness flow sweetly down and are appropriated by the freedom of the good man; while from hell, through the bad spirits, all the elements of damning evil flow foully up and are appropriated by the freedom of the bad man.

The other kind of influx is called immediate. This is when the Lord himself, the pure substance of truth and good, flows into every organ and faculty of man. This influx is perpetual, but is received as truth and good only by the true and good. It is rejected, suffocated, or tainted by those who are in love with falsities and evils. So the light of the sun produces colours varying with the substances it falls on, and water takes forms corresponding to the vessels it is poured into.

The whole invisible world heaven, hell, and the middle state are populated with various groups of humans, occupying the numerous material globes of the universe. The good, on leaving the fleshly body, are angels, the bad, demons. Satan is not a personality, but is a figurative term standing for the whole complex of hell. In the invisible world, time and space in one sense cease to be; in another sense they remain unchanged. They virtually cease because all our present measures of them are annihilated; they virtually remain because exact correspondences to them are left. To spirits, time is no longer measured by the revolution of planets, but by the succession of inward states; space is measured not by way marks and the traversing of distances, but by inward similitude and dissimilitude. Those who are not alike are separated by gulfs of difference. Those who are alike are placed together. Thought and love, forgetfulness and hate, are not hampered by temporal and spatial boundaries. Spiritual forces and beings create material impediments, and are united or separate, reciprocally visible or invisible, mutually conscious or unconscious, according to their own laws of kindred or unknown adaptability.

The soul the true man is its own organised and deathless body, and when it leaves its earthly house of flesh it knows the only resurrection, thus the cast off frame returns to dust forever. Swedenborg repeatedly affirms with emphasis that no-one is born for hell, but that all are intended for heaven and that when anyone comes into hell, it is from his own free fault. He asserts that every infant, whether of devout parents or of impious, when he dies is received by the Lord, and educated in heaven, and becomes an angel. A central principle of which he never loses sight is that "a life of charity, which consists in acting sincerely and justly in every function, in every engagement, and in every work, from a heavenly motive, according to the Divine laws, is

possible for everyone and infallibly leads to heaven.” It does not matter whether the person leading such a life is a Christian or a Gentile. The only essential factor is that his ruling motive is of divine nature and his life full of truth and benevolence.

The Swedenborgian doctrine concerning Christ and his mission is that he was the infinite God incarnate, not personified for the purpose of expiating human sin and purchasing a ransom for the lost by vicarious sufferings, but for the sake of suppressing the rampant power of the hells, weakening the influx of the infernal spirits, setting an example to men, and revealing many important truths. According to this doctrine, the advantage of the Christian over the pagan is that the former is enlightened by the celestial knowledge contained in the Bible, and animated by the affecting motives presented in the drama of the Divine incarnation. There is no probation after this life. Just as one is on leaving the earth he goes into the spiritual world. There, his ruling affection determines his destiny, and that affection can never be extirpated or changed to all eternity. After death, evil life cannot in any manner or degree be altered to a life of goodness, nor infernal love be converted to angelic love, therefore to exchange this life for the opposite is altogether to destroy the spirit. It were easier, says Swedenborg, to change a night bird into a dove, an owl into a bird of paradise, than to change a subject of hell into a subject of heaven after the line of death has been crossed.

The moral reason and charitable heart of Swedenborg vehemently revolted from the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination and vicarious atonement, and the group of thoughts that cluster around them. He protested against these dogmas, refuted them with varied power and consistency; and the leading principles of his own system are creditable to human nature, and attribute no disgrace to the character of God. A debt of eternal gratitude is due to Swedenborg that his influence, certainly destined to be powerful and lasting, is so clearly calculated to advance the interests at once of philosophic intelligence, social affection, and true piety. The superiorities of his view of the future life over those which it seeks to supplant are weighty and numerous. The following may be reckoned among the most prominent.

First, without predicating of God any aggravated severity or casting the faintest shadow on his benevolence, it gives us the most appalling realisation of the horribleness of sin and of its consequences. God is commonly represented in effect, at least as flaming with anger against sinners, and forcibly flinging them into the unappeasable fury of Tophet, where his infinite vengeance may forever satiate itself on them. But, Swedenborg says, God is incapable of hatred or wrath: he casts no-one into hell; but the wicked go where they belong by their own election, from the inherent fitness and preference of their ruling love. The evil man desires to be in hell because there he finds his food, employment, and home; in heaven he would suffer unutterable agonies from every circumstance. The wicked go into hell by the necessary and benignant love of God, not by his indignation; and their

retributions are in their own characters, not in their prison house. This does not flout and trample all magnanimity, nor shock the heart of piety; and yet, showing us men compelled to prefer wallowing in the filth and iniquities of hell, clinging to the very evils whose pangs transfix them, it gives us the direst of all the impressions of sin, and beneath the lowest deep of the popular hell opens to our shuddering conceptions a deep of loathsomeness immeasurably lower still.

Secondly, the Swedenborgian doctrine of the conditions of salvation or reprobation, when compared with the popular doctrine, is marked by striking depth of insight, justice, and liberality. Every man is free. Every man has power to receive the influx of truth and good from the Lord and convert it to its blessed and saving uses, piety towards God, good will towards the neighbour, and all kinds of right works. Who does this, no matter in what land or age he lives, becomes an heir of heaven. Who perverts those Divine gifts to selfishness and unrighteous deeds becomes a subject of hell. No mere opinion, no mere profession, no mere ritual services, no mere external obedience, not all these things together, can save a man, nor their absence condemn him; but the controlling motive of his life, the central and ruling love which constitutes the substance of his being, this decides every man's doom. The view is simple, reasonable, just, and necessary. And so is the doctrine of degrees accompanying it; namely, that there are in heaven different grades and qualities of exaltation and delight, and in hell of degradation and woe, for different men according to their capacities and deserts. A profoundly ethical character pervades the scheme, and the great stamp of law is over it all.

Thirdly, a manifest advantage of Swedenborg's doctrine over the popular doctrine is the intimate connection it establishes between the present and the future, the visible and the invisible, God and man. Heaven and hell are not distant localities, entrance into which is to be won or avoided by moral artifices or sacramental subterfuges, but they are states of being depending on personal goodness or evil. God is not throned at the heart or on the apex of the universe, where at some remote epoch we hope to go and see him, but he is the Life feeding our lives freshly every instant. The spiritual world, with all its hosts, sustains and arches, fills and envelops us. Death is the dropping of the outer body, the lifting of an opaque veil, and we are among the spirits, unchanged, as we were before. Judgment is not a tribunal dawning on the close of the world's weary centuries, but the momentary assimilation of a celestial or an infernal love leading to states and acts, rewards and retributions corresponding. Before this view the dead universe becomes a live transparency overwritten with the will, tremulous with the breath, and irradiate with the illumination of God.

Judging from what we know of psychological and religious history, it is far more likely that a man should confound his intangible reveries with solid fact than that he should be inspired by God to reveal a world of mysterious truths. Furthermore, while we are impressed with the reasonableness, probability,

and consistency of most of the general principles of Swedenborg's exposition of the future life, we cannot but shrink from many of the details and forms in which he carries them out. Despite the earnest avowals of able disciples of his school that all his details are strictly necessitated by his premises, and that all his premises are laws of truth, we are compelled to regard a great many of his assertions as purely arbitrary and purely fanciful. But, denying that his scheme of eschatology is a scientific representation of the reality, and looking at it as a poetic structure reared by a working knowledge and imagination on the ground of reason, nature, and morality, whose foundation walls, columns, and grand outlines are truthful, while many of its details, ornaments, and images are fancy, it must be acknowledged as an example of powerful literature. Some would argue that Swedenborg's accounts of hell and heaven have more variety of imagery, power of moral truth and appeal, exhibition of dramatic justice, transcendent delights of holiness and love, curdling terrors of evil and woe, strength of philosophical grasp, and sublimity of emblematic conception, than is to be found in Dante's earth renowned poem.



Gregor Erhart, *Vanitas*, c. 1500.
Painted linden wood, height: 46 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Ligier Richier, Tomb of René de Chalon,
Prince of Orange: *Flayed*, or *The Skeleton*, 1547.
Stone. Église Saint-Étienne de Bar-le-Duc.

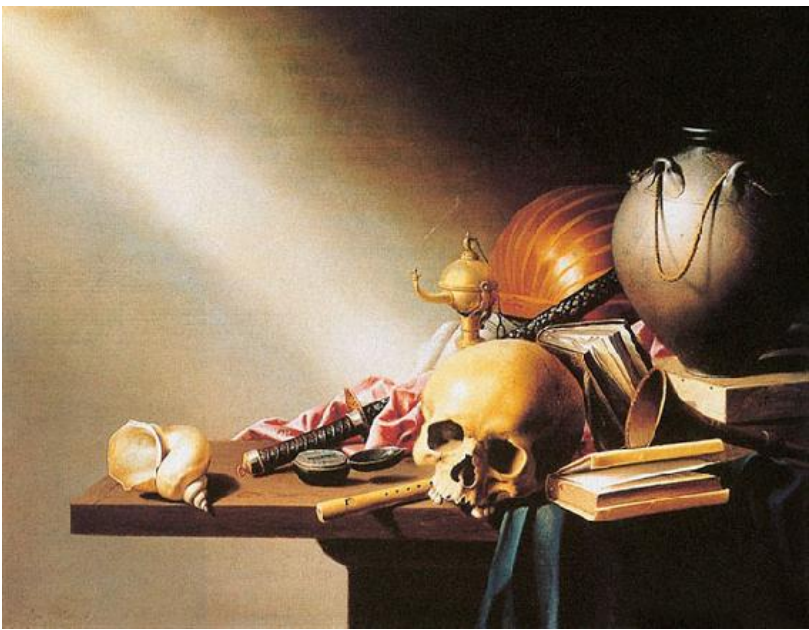
The last of the three prominent phenomena which as before said followed the Protestant Reformation was rationalism, an attempt to try all religious questions at the tribunal of reason and by the tests of conscience. The great movement led by Luther was but one element in a numerous train of influences and events all yielding their different contributions to that resolute rationalistic tendency which afterwards broke out so powerfully in England, France, and Germany, and, spreading thence into every country in Christendom, has been, in secret and in public, with slow, sure steps,

irresistibly advancing ever since. In the history of scholasticism there were three distinct epochs. The first period was characterised by the servile submission and conformity of philosophy to the theology dictated by the Church. The second period was marked by the formal alliance and attempted reconciliation of philosophy and theology. The third period saw an ever increasing jealousy and separation between the philosophers and the theologians. Many adventurous thinkers pushed his speculations beyond the limits of the established theology, and deliberately dissented from the orthodox standards in his conclusions. Perhaps Abelard, who openly strove to put all the Church dogmas in forms acceptable to philosophy, and who did not hesitate to reject in many instances what seemed to him unreasonable, deserves to be called the father of rationalism. The works of Descartes, Leibnitz, Wolf, Kant's "Religion within the Bounds of Pure Reason," together with the influence and the writings of many other eminent philosophers, gradually gave momentum to the impulse and popularity to the habits of free thought and criticism even in the realm of theology. The dogmatic scheme of the dominant Church was firmly seized, many errors shaken out to the light and exposed, and many long received opinions questioned and flung into doubt. The authenticity of many of the popular doctrines regarding the future life could not fail to be denied as soon as it was attempted as was extensively done about the middle of the 18th century to demonstrate them by mathematical methods, with all the array of axioms, theorems, lemmas, doubts, and solutions. Flugge has historically illustrated the employment of this method at considerable length.

The essence of rationalism is the affirmation that neither the Fathers, nor the Church, nor the Scriptures, nor all of them together, can rightfully establish any proposition opposed to the logic of sound philosophy, the principles of reason, and the evident truth of nature. Around this thesis the battle has been fought and the victory won; and it will stand with spreading favour as long as there are cultivated minds in the world. This position is, in logical necessity, and as a general thing in fact, that of the large though loosely cohering body of believers known as "Liberal Christians;" and it is tacitly held by still larger and ever growing numbers nominally connected with sects that officially eschew it with horror. The result of the studies and discussions associated with this principle, so far as it relates to the subject before us, has been the rejection of the following popular doctrines: the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures as an ultimate authority in matters of belief; unconditional predestination; the satisfaction theory of the vicarious atonement; the visible second coming of Christ, in person, to burn up the world and to hold a general judgment; the intermediate state of souls; the resurrection of the body; a local hell of material fire in the bowels of the earth; the eternal damnation of the wicked. These old dogmas, scarcely changed, still remain in the stereotyped creeds of all the prominent denominations; but they slumber there to an astonishing extent unrealised, unnoticed, undesired

by the great multitude of common believers, while every consciously rational investigator vehemently repudiates them. To every candid mind that has really studied their nature and proofs, their absurdity is now transparent on all the grounds alike of history, metaphysics, morals, and science.

The changes of the popular Christian belief in regards to three salient points have been especially striking. First being the interpretation of the immediate fate of the dead as an intermediate state. The predominant Jewish doctrine was that all souls went indiscriminately into a sombre underworld, where they awaited a resurrection. The earliest Christian view prevalent was the same, with the exception that it divided that place of departed spirits into two parts, a painful for the bad, a pleasant for the good. The next opinion that prevailed in the Roman Catholic was the same as the foregoing, with two exceptions: it established a purgatory in addition to the previous Paradise and hell, and it opened heaven itself for the immediate entrance of a few spotless souls. Pope John XXII., as Gieseler shows, was accused of heresy by the theological doctors of Paris because he declared that no soul could enter heaven and enjoy the beatific vision until after the resurrection. Pope Benedict XII drew up a list of one hundred and seventeen heretical opinions held by the Armenian Christians. One of these notions was that the souls of all deceased adults wander in the air until the Day of Judgment, neither hell, Paradise, nor heaven being open to them until after that day. Thomas Aquinas says, "Each soul at death immediately flies to its appointed place, whether in hell or in heaven, being without the body until the resurrection, with it afterwards."

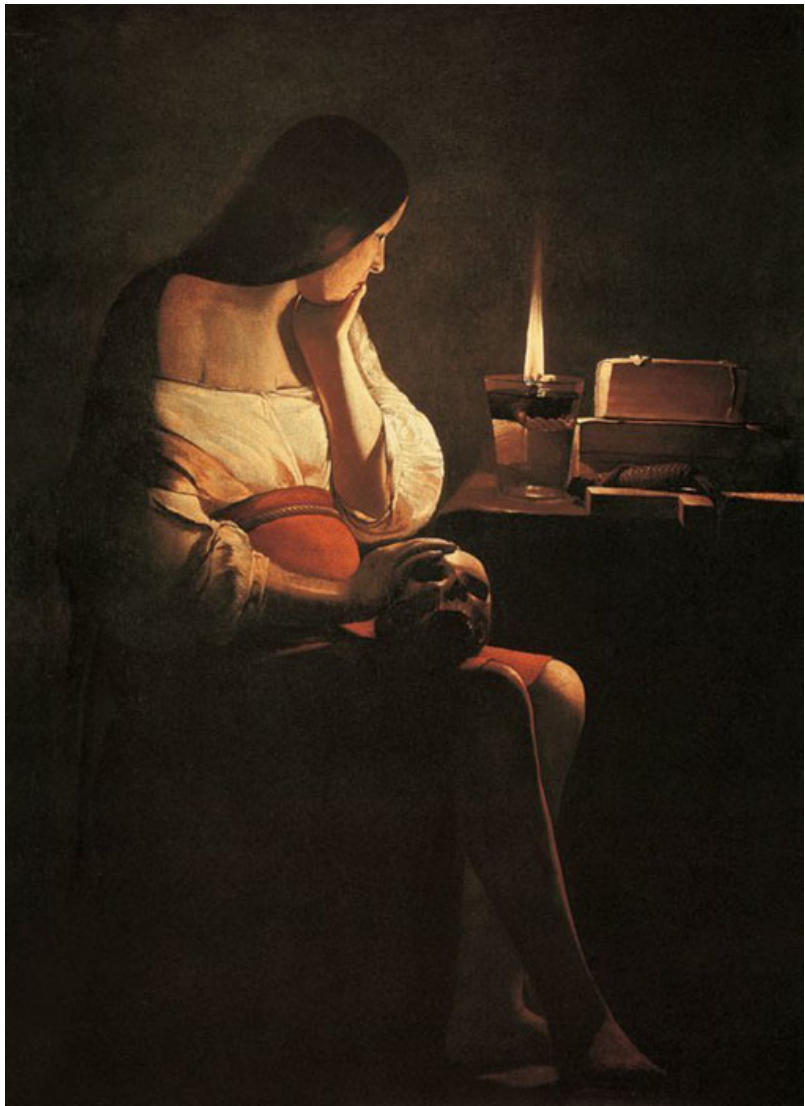


Harmen Steenwyck, *Still Life: an Allegory of the Vanities of Human Life*, c. 1640.
Oil on oak, 39.2 x 50.7 cm. The National Gallery, London.

The dogma of the orthodox Protestants varied slightly amongst the different sects, but generally agreeing that at death all redeemed souls pass instantly to heaven and all unredeemed souls to hell. The principal variation from this among believers within the Protestant fellowship has been the notion that the souls of all men die or sleep with the body until the Day of Judgment, a notion which peeps out here and there in superstitious spots along the pages of ecclesiastical history, and which has found now and then an advocate during the last century and a half. The Council of Elvin, in Spain, forbade the lighting of tapers in churchyards, lest it should disturb the souls of the deceased buried there. At this day, in prayers and addresses at funerals, no phrases are more common than those alluding to death as a sleep, and implying that the departed one is to slumber peacefully in his grave until the resurrection. And yet, at the same time, by the same persons contrary ideas are frequently expressed. The truth is, the subject, owing to the contradictions between their creed and their reason, is left by most persons in hopeless confusion and uncertainty. They have no determinately reconciled and conscious views of their own. Rationalism sweeps away all the foregoing incongruous medley at once, denying that we know any thing about the precise localities of heaven and hell, or the destined order of events in the hidden future of separate souls; affirming that all we should dare to say is simply that the souls whether of good or of bad men, on leaving the body, go

at once into a spiritual state of being, where they will live immortally, as God decrees, never returning to be reinvested with the vanished charnel houses of clay they once inhabited.

Secondly, the thought that Christ after his death descended into the underworld to ransom mankind, or a part of mankind, from the doom there, is in the foundation of the apostolic theology. It was a central element in the belief of the Fathers, and of the Church for fourteen hundred years. None of the prominent Protestant reformers thought of denying it. Calvin lays great stress on it. Apinus and others at Hamburg maintained that Christ's descent was a part of his humiliation, and that in it he suffered unutterable pains for us. On the other hand, Melancthon and the Wittenbergers held that the descent was a part of Christ's triumph, since by it he won a glorious victory over the powers of hell. But gradually the importance and the redeeming effects attached to Christ's descent into hell were transferred to his death on the cross. Slowly the primitive dogma dwindled away, and finally sunk out of sight, through an ever encroaching disbelief in the physical conditions on which it rested and in the pictorial environments by which it was recommended. And now it is scarcely ever heard of, save when brought out from old scholastic tomes by some theological delver. Baumgarten Crusius has learnedly illustrated the important place long held by this notion, and well shown its gradual retreat into the unnoticed background.



Georges de La Tour, *Magdalene of the Night Light*,
c. 1642-1644. Oil on canvas, 128 x 94 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Juan de Valdés Leal, *Finis Gloriarum Mundi*
(The End of Worldly Glory), 1671-1672.

Oil on canvas, 220 x 216 cm. Hospital de la Caridad, Seville.

The other particular doctrine which we said had undergone remarkable change is in regard to the number of the saved. A blessed improvement has come over the popular Christian feeling and teaching in respect to this momentous subject. The Jews excluded from salvation all but their own strict ritualists. The apostles, it is true, excluded none but the stubbornly wicked. But the majority of the Fathers virtually allowed the possibility of salvation to few indeed. Chrysostom doubted if out of the hundred thousand souls constituting the Christian population of Antioch in his day one hundred would be saved! And when we read, with shuddering soul, the calculations of Cornelius a Lapide, or the celebrated sermon of Massillon on the "Small Number of the Saved," we are compelled to confess that they fairly represent the almost universal sentiment and conviction of Christendom for more than seventeen hundred years. A quarto volume published in London in 1680, by

Du Moulin, called "Moral Reflections upon the Number of the Elect," affirmed that not one in a million, from Adam down to our times, shall be saved." A flaming execration blasted the whole heathen world, and a metaphysical quibble doomed ninety nine of every hundred in Christian lands. Collect the whole relevant theological literature of the Christian ages, from the birth of Tertullian to the death of Jonathan Edwards, strike the average pitch of its doctrinal temper, and you will get this result: that in the field of human souls Satan is the harvester, God the gleaner; hell receives the whole vintage in its wine press of damnation, heaven obtains only a few straggling clusters plucked for salvation. The crowded wains roll staggering into the iron doorways of Satan's fire and brimstone barns; the redeemed vestiges of the world crop of men are easily borne to heaven in the arms of a few weeping angels. How different is the prevailing tone of preaching and belief now! What a cheerful ascent of views from the mournful passage of the dead over the river of oblivion fancied by the Greeks, or the excruciating passage of the river of fire painted by the Catholics, to the happy passage of the river of balm, healing every weary bruise and sorrow, promised by the Universalists! It is true, the old harsh exclusiveness is still organically embedded in the established creeds, all of which deny the possibility of salvation beyond the little circle that vitally appropriate the vicarious atonement of Christ; but then this is, for the most part, a dead letter in the creeds. In the hearts and in the candid confessions of all but one in a thousand it is discredited and sincerely repelled as an abomination to human nature, a reflection against God, an outrage upon the substance of ethics. Remorseless bigots may gloat and exult over the thought that those who reject their dogmas shall be thrust into the roaring fire gorges of hell; but a better spirit is the spirit of the age we live in; and, doubtless, a vast majority of the men we daily meet really believe that all who try to the best of their ability, according to their light and circumstances, to do what is right, in the love of God and man, shall be saved. In that moving scene of the great dramatist where the burial of the innocent and hapless Ophelia is represented, and Laertes vainly seeks to win from the Church official the full funeral rites of religion over her grave, the priest may stand for the false and cruel ritual spirit, the brother for the just and native sentiment of the human heart. Says the priest: "We should profane the service of the dead/ To sing a requiem and such rest to her/ As to peace parted souls." And Laertes replies, "Lay her in the earth;/ And from her fair and unpolluted flesh/ Shall violets spring. I tell thee, churlish priest,/ A ministering angel shall my sister be/ When thou liest howling."

Indeed, who that has a heart in his bosom would not be ashamed not to sympathise with the gentle hearted Burns when he expresses even to the devil himself the quaint and kindly wish, "Oh wad ye tak' a thought and mend!"

The creeds and the priests, in congenial alliance with many evil things, strove to counteract this progressive self emancipation from cruel falsehoods and superstitions, but in vain. The terms of salvation are seen lying in the

righteous will of a gracious God, not in the heartless caprice of a priesthood nor in the iron gripe of a set of dogmas. The old priestly monopoly over the way to heaven has been taken off in the knowledge of the enlightened present, and, for all who have unfettered feet to walk with, the passage to God is now across a free bridge. The ancient exactors may still sit in their toll house creeds and confessionals; but their authority is gone, and the virtuous traveller, stepping from the ground of time upon the planks that lead over into eternity, smiles as he passes scot free by their former taxing terrors.

The reign of sacramentalists and dogmatists rapidly declined. Reason, common sentiment, the liberal air, the best and the strongest tendencies of the people, were responsible for this downfall. Every successive explosion of the Second Adventist fanaticism left that element behind. Its rage in America, under the auspices of Miller in the 19th century, was tame and feeble when compared with the terror awakened in Europe in the 15th century by Stofler's prediction of an approaching comet. Every new discovery of the harmonies of science, and of the perfections of nature, and of the developments of the linear logic of God consistently unfolding in implicated sequences of peaceful order unperturbed by shocks of failure and epochs of remedy, increased and popularised an intelligent faith in the original ordination and the intended permanence of the constitution of things. Finally men ceased to look up to the blue dome cleave, open for the descent of angelic squadrons headed by the majestic Son of God, the angry breath of his mouth consuming the world, ceased to expect salvation by any other method than that of earnest and devout truthfulness, love, good works, and pious submissiveness to God, ceased to fancy that their souls, after waiting through the long sleep or separation of death, will return and take on their old bodies again. Recognising the divine plan for training souls in this lower and transient state for a higher and immortal state, they will endeavour, in natural piety and mutual love, while they live, to exhaust the genuine uses of the world that now is, and thus prepare themselves to enter with happiest auspices, when they die, the world prepared for them beyond these mortal shores.

These cheerful prophecies must be verified in the natural course of things. The rapid spread of the doctrine of a future life taught by the spirit rappers is a remarkable revelation of the great extent to which the minds of the common people have at last become free from the long domination of the ecclesiastical dogmas on that subject. The leading representatives of the "Spiritualists" affirm, with much unanimity, the most comforting conclusions as to the condition of the departed. They exclude all wrath and favouritism from the disposition of the deity. They emphatically repudiate the ordinarily taught terms of salvation, and deny the doctrine of hopeless reprobation. All death is beautiful and progressive. "Every form and thing is constantly growing lovelier and every sphere purer." The abode of each soul in the future state is determined, not by decrees or dogmas or forms of any kind, but by qualities of character, degrees of love, purity, and wisdom. There are seven ascending

spheres, each more abounding than the one below it in beauties, glories, and happiness. "The first sphere is the natural; the second, the spiritual; the third, the celestial; the fourth, the supernatural; the fifth, the super-spiritual; the sixth, the super-celestial; the seventh, the Infinite Vortex of Love and Wisdom." Whatever be thought of the pretensions of this doctrine to be a Divine revelation, whatever be thought of its various psychological, cosmological, and theological characteristics, its ethics are those of natural reason. It is wholly irreconcilable with the popular ecclesiastical system of doctrines. Its epidemic diffusion until now burdened as it is with such nauseating accompaniments of crudity and absurdity, it reckons its adherents by millions is a tremendous evidence of the looseness with which the old, cruel dogmas sit on the minds of the masses of the people, and of their eager readiness to welcome more humane views.

In science, the erroneous doctrines of the Middle Age are now generally discarded. The mention of them but provokes a smile or awakens surprise. Yet, as compared with the historic annals of our race, it is but recently that the true order of the solar system has been unveiled, the weight of the air discovered, the circulation of the blood made known, the phenomena of insanity intelligently studied, the results of physiological chemistry brought to light, and the symmetric domain and sway of calculable law pushed far out in every direction of nature and experience. It used to be supposed that digestion was effected by means of a mechanical power equal to many tonnes. Borelli asserted that the muscular force of the heart was one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. These absurd estimates only disappeared when the properties of the gastric juice were discerned. The method in which we distinguish the forms and distances of objects was not understood until Berkeley published his *New Theory of Vision*. Few people were aware of the opposition of intolerance, stolidity, and authority against which the brilliant advances of scientific discovery and mechanical invention and social improvement have been forced to contend, and in despite of which they have slowly won their way. Excommunications, dungeons, fires, sneers, polite persecution, bitter neglect, tell the story, from the time the Athenians banned Anaxagoras for calling the sun a mass of fire, to the day an English mob burned the warehouses of Arkwright because he had invented the spinning jenny. But, despite all the hostile energies of establishment, prejudice, and scorn, the earnest votaries of philosophical truth have studied and toiled with ever accumulating victories, until now a hundred sciences are ripe with emancipating fruits and perfect freedom to be taught. Railroads gird the lands with ribs of trade, telegraphs thread the airs with electric tidings of events, and steamships crease the seas with channels of foam and fire. There is no longer danger of anyone being put to death, or even being excluded from the "best society," for saying that the earth moves. An eclipse cannot be regarded as the frown of God when it is regularly foretold with certainty. The measurement of the atmosphere exterminated the wiseacre proverb, "Nature abhors a

vacuum,” by the burlesque addition, “but only for the first thirty two feet.” The madman cannot be looked on as divinely inspired, his words to be caught as oracles, or as possessed by a devil, to be chained and scourged, since Pinel’s great work has brought insanity within the range of organic disease. When Franklin’s kite drew electricity from the cloud to his knuckle, the superstitious theory of thunder died a natural death.



Peter Paul Rubens, *The Deposition of Christ* (centre panel), 1612.
Oil on panel, 421 x 311 cm. The Cathedral of Our Lady
(Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekathedraal), Antwerp.



Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn,
Elevation of the Cross, 1634. Oil on panel.
96.2 x 76.2 cm. Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

The vast progress of physical science during the last four centuries has not been made in any kindred degree in the prevailing theology. Most of the harsh, unreasonable tenets of the elaborately morbid and distorted medieval theology are still retained in the creeds of the great majority of Christendom. The causes of this difference are plain. The establishment of newly discovered truths in material science being less intimately connected with the prerogatives of the ruling classes, less clearly hostile to the permanence of their power, they have not offered so pertinacious an opposition to progress in

this province: they have yielded a much larger freedom to physicists than to moralists, to discoverers of mathematical, chemical, and mechanical law than to reformers of political and religious thought. Livy tells us that, in Rome in 573 CE, some concealed books of Numa were found, which, on examination by the priests, being thought injurious to the established religion, were ordered to be burned. The charge was not that they were unguene, nor that their contents were false; but they were dangerous. In the 2nd century CE, an imperial decree forbade the reading of the Sibylline Oracles because they contained prophecies of Christ and doctrines of Christianity. By an act of the English Parliament, in the middle of the 17th century, every copy of the Racovian Catechism (an exposition of the Socinian doctrine) that could be obtained was burned in the streets.

The Index Expurgatorius for Catholic countries is still freshly filled every year. And in Protestant countries a more subtle and a more effectual influence prevents, on the part of the majority, the candid perusal of all theological discussions which are not pitched in the orthodox key. Certain dogmas are the absorbed thought of the sects which defend them: no fresh and independent thinking is to be expected on those subjects, no matter how purely fictitious these secretions of the brain of the denomination or of some ancient leader may be, no matter how glaringly out of keeping with the intelligence and liberty which reign in other realms of faith and feeling. There is nowhere else in the world a tyranny so pervasive and despotic as that which rules in the department of theological opinion. The prevalent slothful and slavish surrender of the grand privileges and duties of individual thought, independent personal conviction and action in religious matters, is at once astonishing, pernicious, and disgraceful. The effect of entrenched tradition, priestly directors, a bigoted, overawing, and persecuting sectarianism, is nowhere else a hundredth part so powerful or so extensive.

In addition to the bitter determination by interested persons to suppress reforming investigations of the doctrines which hold their private prejudices in supremacy, and to the tremendous social prestige of old establishment, another cause has been active to keep theology stationary while science has been making such rapid conquests. Science deals with tangible quantities, theology with abstract qualities. The cultivation of the former yields visible practical results of material comfort; the cultivation of the latter yields only inward spiritual results of mental welfare. Accordingly, science has a thousand resolute votaries where theology has one unshackled disciple. At this moment, a countless multitude, furnished with complex apparatus, are ransacking every nook of nature, and plucking trophies, and the world with honouring attention reads their reports. But how few with competent preparation and equipment, with fearless consecration to truth, unhampered, with fresh free vigour, are scrutinising the problems of theology, enthusiastically bent upon refuting errors and proving verities! And what reception do the conclusions of those few meet at the hands of the public?

Surely they fail to prompt recognition, frank criticism, and grateful acknowledgment or courteous refutation. No; but studied exclusion from notice, or evasions and insulting vituperation.

The theatrical character of the popular theology is enough to reveal its origin and its fundamental falsity. The difference between its lurid and phantasmal details and the calm eternal verities in the divinely constituted order of nature is as great as the difference between those stars which one sees in consequence of a blow on the forehead and those he sees by turning his gaze to the nightly sky. To every competent thinker, the bare appreciation of such a passage as that which closes Chateaubriand's chapter on the Last Judgment, with the huge bathos of its incongruous mixture of sublime and absurd, is its sufficient refutation:

The globe trembles on its axis; the moon is covered with a bloody veil; the threatening stars hang half-detached from the vault of heaven, and the agony of the world commences. Now resounds the trump of the angel. The sepulchres burst: the human race issues all at once, and fills the Valley of Jehoshaphat! The Son of Man appears in the clouds; the powers of hell ascend from the infernal depths; the goats are separated from the sheep; the wicked are plunged into the gulf; the just ascend to heaven; God returns to his repose, and the reign of eternity begins.

Nothing saves this whole scheme of doctrine from instant rejection except neglect of thought, or incompetence of thought, on the part of those who contemplate it. The peculiar dogmas of the exclusive sects are the products of mental and social disease, psychological growths in pathological moulds. The naked shapes of beautiful women floating around St. Anthony in full display of their maddening charms are interpreted by the Romanist Church as a visible work of the devil. An intelligent physician accounts for them by the laws of physiology, the morbid action of morbid nerves. There is no doubt whatever as to which of these explanations is correct. The absolute prevalence of that explanation is merely a question of time. Meanwhile, it is the part of every wise and devout man, without bigotry, without hatred for any, with strict fidelity to his own convictions, with entire tolerance and kindness for all who differ from him, sacredly to seek after verity himself and earnestly to endeavour to impart it to others. To such men forms of opinion, instead of being prisons, fetters, and barriers, will be but as tents of a night while they march through life, the burning and cloudy column of inquiry their guide, the eternal temple of truth their goal.

The actual relation, the becoming attitude, the appropriate feeling of man towards the future state, the concealed segment of his destiny, are impressively shown in the dying scene of one of the wisest and most gifted of men, one of the fittest representatives of the modern mind. In a good old age, on a pleasant spring day, with a vast expanse of experience behind him, with an immensity of hope before him, he lay calmly expiring. "More light!" he cried, with departing breath; and death, solemn warder of eternity, led him, blinded, before the immemorial veil of awe and secrets. It rolled up as the

flesh bandage fell from his spirit, and he walked at large, triumphant or appalled, amidst the unimagined revelations of God.

And now, recalling the varied studies we have passed through, and seeking for the conclusion or root of the matter, what shall we say? This much we will say. First, the fearless Christian, fully acquainted with the results of a criticism unsparing as the requisitions of truth and candour, can scarcely, with intelligent honesty, do more than place his hand on the beating of his heart, and fix his eye on the tomb of Jesus, and exclaim, "Feeling here the inspired promise of immortality, and seeing there the sign of God's authentic seal, I gratefully believe that Christ has risen, and that my soul is deathless!" Secondly, the trusting philosopher, fairly weighing the history of the world's belief in a future life, and the evidences on which it rests, can scarcely, with justifying warrant, do less than lay his hand on his body, and turn his gaze aloft, and exclaim, "Though death shatters this shell, the soul may survive, and I confidently hope to live forever." Meanwhile, the believer and the speculator, combining to form a Christian philosophy wherein doubt and faith, thought and freedom, reason and sentiment, nature and revelation, all embrace, even as the truth of things and the experience of life demand, may both adopt for their own the expression wrought for himself.

Christian Symbolism

Christianity, similar to most religions, is largely made up of symbolism. Christian symbolism serves as an excellent tool to understand the Christian doctrine of death and future life. It is often difficult to express spiritual things adequately in words, and therefore even the words used for religious purposes must be largely metaphorical and symbolic, and a certain element of the esoteric and mystical, which so often accompanies the infancy of a religion, was a necessary characteristic of early Christianity. The birth of Christian symbolism must be traced back to the art of the Catacombs, especially the Catacombs of Rome, the Eternal City — those far-stretching and labyrinth-like underground passages or galleries, interspersed with chambers in various forms, where the followers of the new faith buried their dead. From the cemeteries in subterranean lies the most numerous remains of the early centuries of Christianity. These relics bearing Christian emblems and inscriptions, or representing Christian subjects, have been brought to light and in beholding their half-obliterated wall-paintings, we may still form a distinct idea how the Christian element was first introduced into art. There were always two classes of symbols, fixed and arbitrary. In the one class, emblems acquired a fixed meaning, the relation of which to the thing signified is not always traceable, though in many cases it is fairly obvious. There is no clear obvious reason why a fish should signify Christ, or a palm-branch martyrdom; and the application of the Four Living Creatures of Ezekiel and the

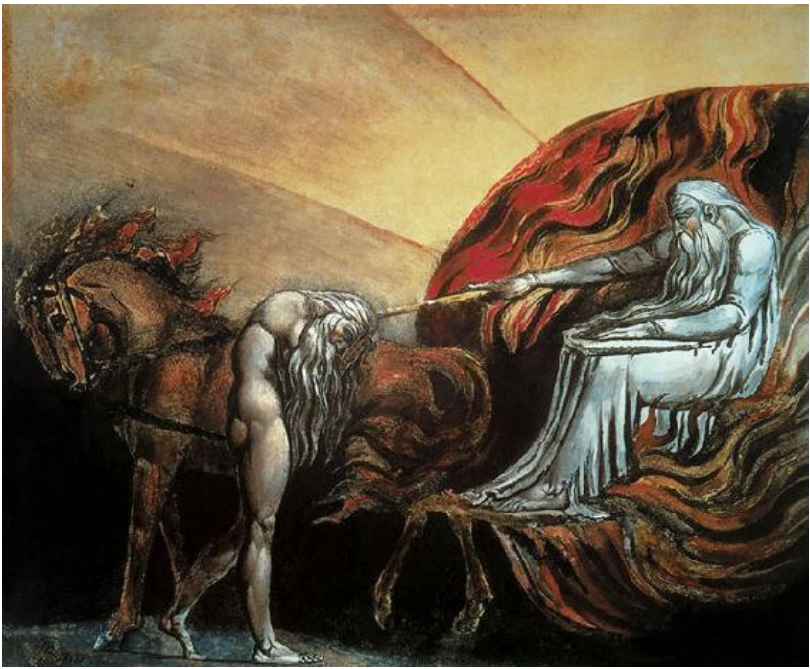
Apocalypse to the Four Evangelists does not explain itself very easily. Yet these and many others acquired the value of Egyptian ideographs, and, explainable or not, were generally accepted with meanings as definite as words.

The earliest Christian symbolism was for the most part constructed so that it should be understood fully by the initiated only. At the time in which Christianity was revealed to the world, esoteric religions were common; and though Christianity differed from Mithraism and various Gnostic sects in that it had received and obeyed a command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, nevertheless there were many details which were only explained to those who had accepted the preliminary teaching. These, as in other religions, were often represented by signs to which the uninitiated would attach either some other, or perhaps no meaning at all, but which would remind the initiated of what they had learnt. As there has been an unbroken tradition of Christianity, from those troublesome times of its beginning through the days when it no longer needed to hide itself in caves and catacombs until now, we know fairly well what these symbols meant. But had Christianity died out before the cessation of persecution, many of them would be as great puzzles to antiquaries as some of the Mithraic devices still remain. Even after the Peace of the Church the tradition of esoterism lingered on, as St. John Chrysostom's not infrequent phrase, "The initiated will understand," shows us; and the same symbols and types continued to be used, even after their meanings had become common property. It is not at all certain that what is known as the *disciplina arcani* had any real existence, and certainly if it had, some of the Apologists, such as St. Justin, did not take much account of it.

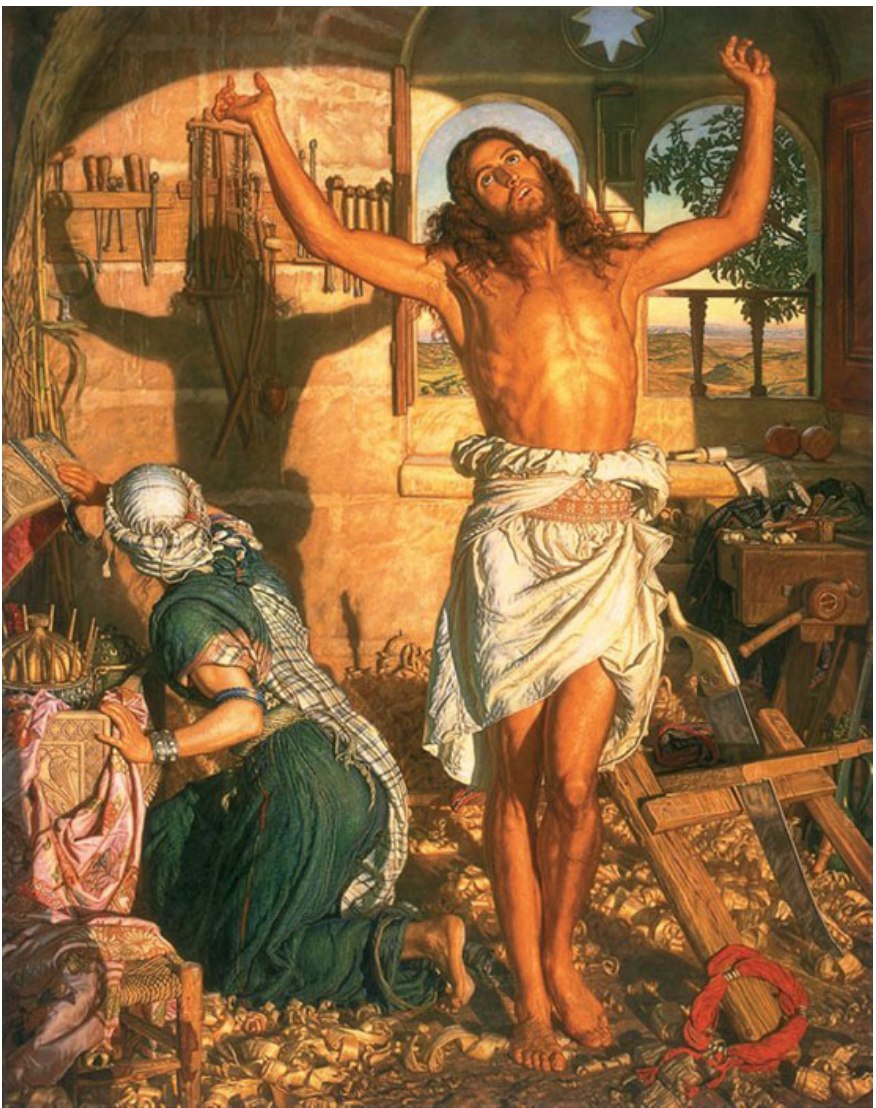
The natural instinct of self-preservation, coupled with an objection to casting the pearls of the new religion before pagans, would lead to a considerable amount of unsystematic concealment, which resulted in signs and emblems analogous to those of modern Freemasons. The evidence of the primitive liturgies, with their formulae for guarding the doors, so that, as James of Edessa puts it, the pagan should not hear the sacred mysteries and parody them in the worship of their false gods, shows us that certain things were practically kept secret, and this would be especially the case when discovery was a matter of life or death.

While it is indisputable that in a great number of the early monuments the Fish is used to figure Christ, it is equally indisputable that the emblem was used to indicate Christians as a body. It is very frequently portrayed on sepulchral monuments, apparently as an indication of the status of the dead, for it is only used to indicate a Christian tomb in Latin monuments. In the catacombs there is an early and rude drawing of two fish adoring a cross. The Fish as a symbol of Christ is simply an esoteric symbol, and is used to represent Christians in general as well as Christ. It is never used in the personal, but only in the abstract as an ideograph, and is never surrounded by

a nimbus. For instance, on an engraved gem of the third century there is a head of Christ, with the name engraved round it, resting upon a fish.



William Blake, *God Judging Adam*, 1795.
Colour-printed relief etching with ink and
watercolour on paper, 43.2 x 53.5 cm. Tate Gallery, London.



William Holman Hunt,
The Shadow of Death, 1870-1873.
Oil on canvas, 214.2 x 168.2 x 33 cm.
Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

God and the Trinity

The function of symbolism in art is to portray to the mind, by means of visible images, conceptions of the soul. Christian symbolism thus endeavouring to elucidate the mystery of the invisible God, its first and greatest subject is God Himself. The source of the divine nature is God the Father. The Second Person receives it by generation; therefore he is called the Son. The Holy

Ghost receives the divine nature not by generation, but by procession. All are equally God, equal in power, wisdom and goodness; the only difference between them is their mutual relation to each other, or else they would all be the same person.

The idea of a divine Trinity is by no means confined to Christianity, and mingled with this doctrine was the ancient mysticism of the number three. Space forbids more than this bare allusion to the old idea that nothing would be complete unless divisible by three and all nature was held to have inherently this triple mystery. St. Augustine divides man into mind, consciousness and love. Man being in the image of God, there must be the human trinity of Body, Soul and Spirit. Apart from the inherent difficulties of depicting pure spirit which is not clothed with flesh, there was in the early ages of the Church a natural reluctance to give to God a visible form which might in any sense be compared to that of Jupiter. The spirituality of God was so passionately insisted upon by the first Christians that it was impossible for them to clothe him with the lineaments of a man.

For four hundred years, there seems to have been no attempt to depict God the Father. If the Almighty was to be represented in art, it was always under the form of God manifested in the flesh, in the person of Christ. St. John of Damascus declares that the essence of the Divine nature ought not to be represented, for it has never been revealed to mortal eye. After the fourth century, we get the first instance of an attempt to portray God the Father, and this is frankly anthropomorphic. By this time some of the terror and prejudice against pagan idolatry had weakened.

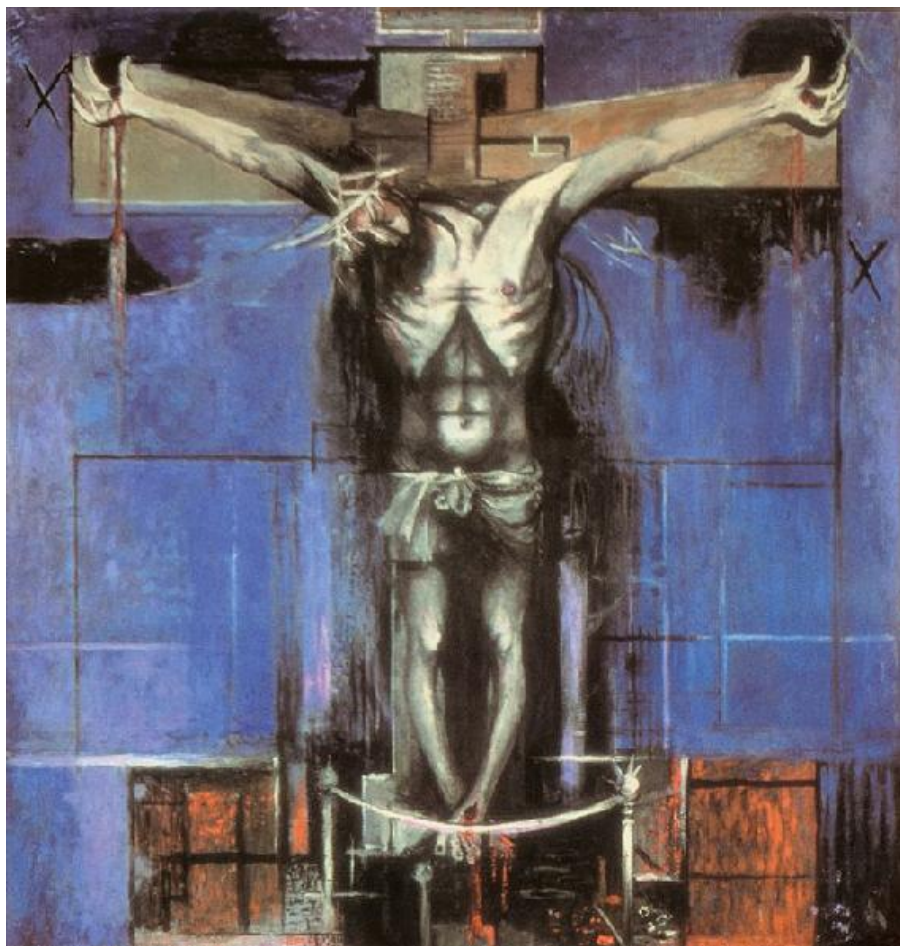
For about eight hundred years, men portrayed the Trinity by certain attributes rather than by anthropomorphic images. God the Father represented with a hand, Christ by a cross, the Holy Ghost by a dove or a book. The unity and equality of the 'Three Persons' was so carefully expressed that up until the 13th and 14th centuries there is little attempt to differentiate the 'Three Persons' in their Personality, but only by attributes or by symbols expressive of their relations. In the earliest instance all three people are alike. In a manuscript from the 12th century, all three are alike as grave bearded majestic figures blessing the creation of the world. After the 13th century, attempts are made to differentiate the 'Three Persons'; by representing the Father as older than the Son, and by representing the Holy Ghost as a dove (but sometimes as a young man). This differentiation of the Three Persons rapidly grew, so that after this period it is almost invariable to find the Father as an aged man and the Son considerably younger, until this culminates in the heretical monstrosity of representing the Eternal God as a decrepit bald old man.

One of the developments which took place in the 12th century was highly mystical Trinities wherein the Father was represented as a middle-aged man holding a cross on which Christ is dead, while the Holy Ghost is a dove hovering between the two. This seems to have been for a long time the most popular personification of this mystery, possibly because it was so easily

understood.

Another method of expression was in representing the Father and Son as seated with the Holy Dove between them. Instances of all Three Persons in human form are less common than these. All these sane and intelligible methods of visualising the invisible became distorted during the mad jumble of ideas of the 16th and 17th centuries into the ludicrous monstrosities of that period, when we get a single body with three heads, or even more grotesque, during the Renaissance, a single head with three noses and three mouths and four eyes, recalling the gods of Hinduism.

To such a point had these grotesques reached that Urban III, in 1628, forbade the making of these monstrosities of three people in one body, and from that time representations of the Trinity either reverted to their former type, or became crystallised in geometrical forms such as the circle and the triangle. The most abstract figure representing the Trinity is the form of a triangle. Sometimes the triangle is contained in a circle, thus expressing the divine three in unity. Three intertwined circles was another method of expressing the same idea, which came into use about the 13th century. The triangle comprehending in one area three angles, all equal.



Graham Sutherland, *The Crucifixion*,
commissioned 1946. Oil on hardboard,
275 x 262 cm. Saint Matthew's Church, Northampton.

The Trinity was held to express the mystery of the Three Persons in one Godhead. This use of the triangle, with or without a circle, continued down to the 16th century. Sometimes its corners were rounded into circles, and two triangles together are sometimes entwined and formed into geometrical figures. Sometimes the Hebrew Yahweh (Jehovah) is enclosed in the triangle. The circle from very ancient times has been held to represent Eternity, without beginning and without end. A single circle or three circles expressed the Trinity in Unity. Sometimes nine circles, one within the other, all supported by a figure of the Trinity were used to express the creation of the Heavens and the earth, according to the Ptolemaic system of the spheres or epicycles. There is a 14th century manuscript showing the Trinity under the form of a man holding a gigantic circle which encloses nine circles of angels,

then space, then the starry heavens, the waters, and in the middle in the twenty-first circle (three times seven) is the earth.

God the Father, the predominant characteristic of Almighty God in the Old Testament is power; consequently, when men desired to express in form some idea of the Supreme Being they adopted the simile used in the Old Testament of the Hand of God, which most tersely expresses this sense of might in human terms. Apart from speech, the greatest differentiation of the human from the brute creation is the hand. By his hand man carries out all the mighty works born in his brain. So, in like manner, man spoke of the "Hand of the Lord," which fashioned the heavens and measured the waters in its hollow.

For eleven hundred years this "Hand" of the Lord was almost the only expression in art of the First Person of the Trinity. Ezekiel speaks of the "Hand of the Lord God," and there are numerous references in the Old Testament to the power of God under this image. St. Eucherius, a 5th century Bishop of Lyons, speaks of the power of God implied by this figure, and so does St. Prosper of Aquitaine. This symbolical method of representing Him whom no man hath seen lasted all through the Middle Ages down to the decadence of religious art.

The earliest instance occurs in a bas-relief on the tomb of Junius Bassus in the Vatican. There are other examples of an early date, and in all these the Hand is emerging from clouds. The next in date shows the Hand simply extended from the clouds, and appears above the Cross in a mosaic of the sixth century in the church of St. Apollinare, Ravenna.

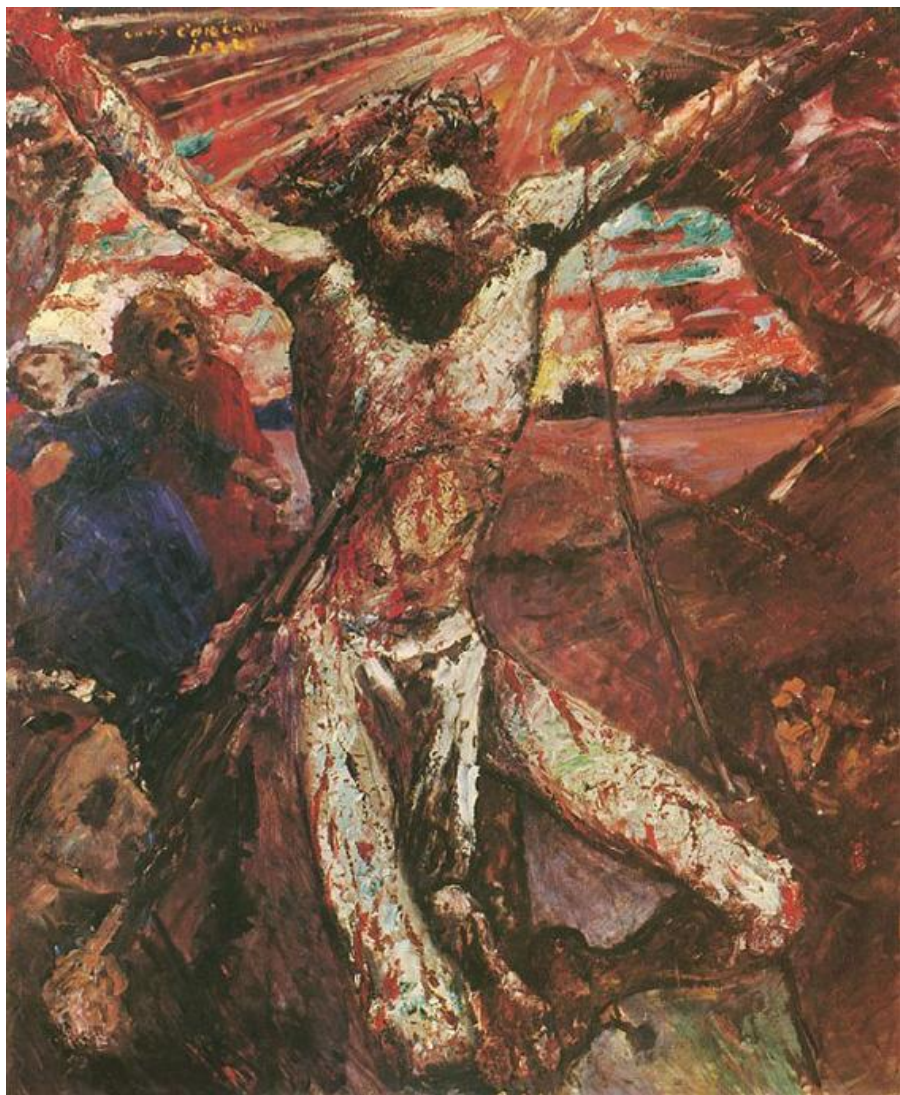
In the next development of this idea, the hand holds a wreath, signifying the crown of glory, above the head of Christ. This occurs in the 6th century mosaic in the Church of St Cosmas and St Damian, in Rome. The same idea of the Hand of God crowning with glory the heads of His saints occurs in the 7th century mosaics in the churches of St. Euphemia, St. Stefano, and St. Agnese, in Rome. In a 9th century mosaic in St. Maria Nuova in Rome, the hand holds a wreath over the Blessed Virgin, who holds her child in her arms. In all these early, instances the hand neither emits rays nor is encircled in a nimbus; but in an illumination of the 9th century in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, the hand is seen in the act of blessing, enclosed in a nimbus over the Baptism of Christ. A still more pronounced form of the nimbus with a cross within it, of about the same date, occurs in a manuscript *Liber Precum* in the same library in a miniature representing the martyrdom of St. Stephen. The hand is giving the Latin benediction, and a little more of the arm is shown than in the earlier instances. A still further development takes place in the same century, where rays of light proceed from the tips of the fingers; this occurs in an illuminated Bible of Charles the Bald. From about this time the hand is usually giving a blessing, either in the Greek or the Latin form.



Marc Chagall, *White Crucifixion*, 1938.

Oil on canvas, 154.3 x 139.7 cm.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago.



Lovis Corinth, *The Red Christ*, 1922.
Oil on canvas, 129 x 108 cm. Neue Pinakothek, Munich.

When the divine hand is not actively blessing, but is simply open, it represents the Divine beneficence shed upon the earth. From this open hand rays are frequently depicted as streaming forth. There is a curious instance of this rayed hand in a Norman chapel in Palermo (12th century), where the Holy Spirit as a Dove proceeds on the rays of light from the Hand of God. In a Saxon Psalter of the 11th century the hand is represented as casting forth the spears and arrows of his lightning. There is a beautiful instance in the western gate of the Cathedral at Sens, where from the summit of the vaulting, the hand of God blesses the army of martyrs who ascend at the sides. At the Baptism of

Christ and at the Agony in the Garden, this blessing and sustaining Hand of the Father is up to the Renaissance a distinguishing feature.

Another development of this all-blessing and all-powerful hand we meet with in quite a late instance in a Greek convent at Salamis, where the hand of God is seen among the clouds holding the souls of the righteous. Up to the 10th century the hand issuing from a cloud, or surrounded by a nimbus, sometimes emitting rays of light as a sun, is always symbolical of God. In certain cases the hand is shown as pointing upwards. There is an instance in the cathedral of Ferrara, 12th century. It also appears on the seal of Hugh Capet, and on many of the coins of the Saxon kings.

A representation of the hand of God appears as stretched out towards Christ during his agony in the Garden of Gethsemane but these are all later developments when the significance of the symbol is obscured by the gradual introduction, first of the arm, and then of the face of the Eternal Father. It was but a short step then to depict the shoulders and gradually to represent the whole figure.

The Cross

The cross, erewhile, like the gallows or the guillotine, the symbol of the doom of the malefactor, has by the sacrifice of Calvary become the symbol of sublime abnegation, of divine pity for the lost and sorrowing sons of men. Therefore it is no longer the badge of shame, but the emblem of triumph and eternal hope; and what to the Roman was a sign of infamy has by its association with the Saviour of humankind become the symbol of victory. It glitters on the crown of the monarch, while the crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick form our national ensign. It crowns alike the loftiest spires of Christendom and the lowliest parish churches. It marks the resting-place of the departed who have died in faith in its efficacy and it is the sign in baptism of their admission to the kingdom of the Crucified. The cross has become one of the most familiar of symbols throughout the whole range of Christian art.

The crucifix is the most materialised of the symbols of the cross, and often develops into a mere representation of acute physical suffering, that, whatever aid to faith it may be to some who gaze upon it, is dishonouring to the Saviour in its repulsive dwelling upon one side alone, and that the least, of his great sacrifice. The agony of the cross was not merely a representation of bodily pain, but rather the burden of the sins of the whole race of mankind.

Later it is Christ dead upon the Cross that is represented. The normal crucifix has the arms fully outstretched. There is a dreadful legend, which perhaps arose from the conventional crucifixes, the successors of those with the standing figure, that the holes for the nails were bored too far apart, and that Christ's arms had to be forced to fit them. In the 17th and 18th centuries

there arose a more realistic type, with the arms high above the head. This is often associated with Jansenist teaching, and has been said to signify that Christ died for the few, not for the whole world. But there is no real authority for calling these “Jansenist” crucifixes. They were only attempts at realistic representation. Crucifixes, sometimes of gigantic size, are usual over the communion tables of Lutheran churches, where they were never abolished, and they have returned, though in spite of much opposition, to many English churches. In the East to the present day, and in the West until the end of the 13th century, the feet of Christ are always represented as nailed apart, with a separate nail through each. Since about 1300 it has been more common in the West to represent the two feet pierced by a single nail. The older form, however, is still used, especially in German art, and is apparently only a question of custom.

The Serpent

The Biblical account of the temptation and fall of Eve naturally makes the serpent a particularly appropriate symbol of Satan. As early as the 8th century it was believed that the serpent that beguiled Eve had the face and head of a woman, “A cherub’s face, a reptile all the rest”; and we therefore often find it so represented in art. In a picture, for instance, by Ercole di Giulio Grandi, the tempter has a woman’s head and bust, and long flowing hair, though the form is otherwise serpentine; the head of the monster and of Eve are on the same level. We see this again in *The Fall* by Filippino Lippi, in the church of S. M. del Carmine at Florence ; though here the human face is so small, and the writhing, serpentine convolutions so evident, that the woman’s face, instead of being an attraction and a snare, is but an added horror. Even Michael Angelo, one of the later and greater men, an artist capable of the grandest idealisations, still conformed to the old treatment with his representation of *The Fall of Man* in the Sistine Chapel. Though his feeling for beauty and his art-power enabled him to combine the human and the serpentine more pleasingly than in the work of the earlier artists, the betraying spirit is still beguiling Eve, the angel of the drawn sword hovers above ready to drive out the guilty progenitors of our fallen race out of the Garden of Eden.

On a Greek vase in the British Museum we have two daughters of Hesperus gathering the golden apples, while a serpent coiled round the tree appears to be guarding them, thus strikingly suggesting some far away echo amidst pagan fancies of the Bible story. The serpent is often represented as winged; but winged or wingless, footed or purely serpentine, with one head or a dozen, with false woman face or stony ophidian glare, it coils round the tree of life full of malignant subtlety and evil power, the sad symbol of enmity to good and God. The winged serpent was probably suggested by the passage in Isaiah that refers to the “fiery flying serpent,” and the additional attribute of

swiftness would be accepted and welcomed as one feature the more of terror, an added horror bestowed on the loathsome crawling reptile, as a further means of compassing the destruction of its victims. The winged serpent is represented in the Egyptian wall-paintings many centuries before its appearance in Christian art. In the Book of Revelation Satan is "the dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil, which deceiveth the whole world."

Various texts refer to the subtlety of the serpent, to its deadly poison, to its dangerous lurking in the dust; and only twice do we find anything complimentary: in the first instance, when the brazen serpent gave life to those who looked upon it, and was thus made to represent of the great Saviour of mankind; and secondly, when the righteous were instructed to combine the wisdom of the serpent with the harmless nature of the dove. The notion of the wisdom of the serpent probably emerged originally from the opening verse of the third chapter in Genesis: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made." However, given that the outcome of this example portrayed the serpent as malignant, it can scarcely be made a legitimate basis for the higher idea we associate with wisdom.

As a talisman against evil and sickness we find the serpent the companion of the physician, the magician, the soothsayer. It may be seen at the foot of the tripod at Delphi, or twined round the staff of Esculapius; while Cassandra, licked behind the ear by the serpent, became gifted with prophecy and foresaw all the evil that should befall Troy. Blind Plutus, after a serpent had licked his sightless eyes, saw clearly all the past, the present, and the future; and strange powers of healing and of mysterious insight were ascribed to those who had come within the influence of the serpent's power and fascination. In the Middle Ages, men, for the possession of power, were held to have sold themselves to evil; and if a man were but a little wiser, a little sadder, a little more taciturn than his neighbours, he was held, like Dr. Faustus, to have invoked the enemy of mankind, and it was a moot point whether he should be viewed with awed respect as a magician, or burnt alive.

As the serpent refuses to hear the voice of the charmer, so the man of wisdom will imitate the prudence of the reptile, and refuse to listen to beguiling words that are full of future peril. Snakes are naturally attracted by sweet sounds, and the serpent charmers take advantage of the fact to capture them; a fact that was evidently well known in the days of the psalmist, who states that "the deaf adder stoppeth her ears, and will not heed the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." The deafness, it will be noted, is no mere lack of the hearing faculty, but a deliberate aversion from threat. It was an old belief that when the serpent heard the voice of the charmer it stopped its ears by burying one of them in the sand and coiling its folds over the other.

The serpent has also been accepted as an emblem of regeneration or immortality from the annual casting of its skin. As a symbol of eternity, the serpent may often be seen having its tail in its mouth, thus forming a complete circle, the accepted emblem of everlasting life. Amongst various early sects of

the serpent was regarded not only as the symbol of wisdom, but also of goodness, and its form was largely employed in charms and amulets. It appears from St Augustine that the Manicheans used it as a direct symbol of Christ; but its employment suggested its antagonistic relationship to the divine. Thus the Ophites, an offshoot of the Gnostics, and sharing with them their belief in the implacability of Jehovah, taught that God was jealous of man, and wished to prevent him from acquiring more knowledge, but that the serpent came to teach man wisdom. The Ophites consequently adored the serpent, a worship probably prompted and suggested by the reminiscences of the ancient religions of Phoenicia and Egypt, where the serpent was revered as a beneficent being.



Paul Gauguin, Breton Calvary:
The Green Christ, 1889. Oil on canvas,
92 x 73.5 cm. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.



Salvador Dalí, *Geologica Echo*.
La Pietà (after Michelangelo), 1982.
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm.
Fundació Gala-Salvador Dalí, Figueres.

Symbols of Death

The symbolical representation of death does not occur in very early Christian art. In the catacombs, though death is everywhere present in the bodies of the dead, it is treated only as a fallen and vanquished enemy, who is absolutely disregarded in the glorious triumph of the conqueror. Death is emphatically swallowed up in victory, and there is not the least desire to portray the fallen.

The pagan idea of death as a youth with an inverted torch, or a pursuing harpy, or as animated skeleton, must have been familiar to Christians. There is an engraving of death as a skeleton dragging a piping shepherd, supposed to be of the time of the Emperor Hadrian, which shows the prevalence of one of these symbols (assumed to be the Etruscan idea of death), but nowhere do we

find this in early Christian art.

There is a certain natural quality in representing death as a skeleton; it was the old way of indicating the ghost of an evil man. However it was only when Christians were allowed to live that they thought of depicting and personifying death. Death is the consequence of the infraction of the Divine law, and strictly speaking is a disintegration and dissolution, not an abstract entity, and it is only when the ignorant and literal ideas of semi-civilised peoples were brought into prominence with the fall of the Roman Empire, that Death becomes personified.

There is an 11th century missal of Worms (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris) which represents Death as a demon bound in chains. There seems a tendency to confuse Death and the Devil at first, but the skeleton figure of Death eclipsed all others in popular art, until we find in the early Renaissance a reversion to the old Greek idea of the Keres, or female furies, in Orcagna's magnificent sweeping Fury, wild-haired, bat-winged and claw-footed, who sweeps through the air with her remorseless scythe. Petrarch also makes Death a woman, a fearful, bat-like and hateful creature. In the legendary history of St. Bartholomew, the demon speaks of Jesus who has made Death who is our queen, a prisoner. Mors was queen of hell, the spouse of Satan, its king.

Crescenzo painted on the wall of the courtyard of the Hospital at Palermo Death as a rider, issuing from the mouth of hell. The Apocalyptic conception of Death seated on a pale horse and slaying as he rode, was a popular theme for some centuries. Bearing a spear in one hand and a coffin under his arm, he springs forward in triumph over a group of prelates and laymen, or amidst prostrate women and dancing girls, or youths and maidens seated by a fountain. This dance, or Triumph of Death, became a favourite subject for a series of pictures showing the ordinary life and occupation of the time, and seems to grow in popularity down to the time of Holbein and the 16th century, until it falls from a great and solemn poem of life and death to a vulgar jeer and mockery, and Death is merely a figure of fun who jokes with a fool.

What may be called a précis of the same subject far more worthily treated is on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa, and is known as the Story of the Three Dead and the Three Living. There is a fine manuscript with the same subject from the early 14th century in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris. Three youths of great beauty, but full of pride, are encountered by three corpses in horrible corruption, who warn them to behold in their condition a mirror of their own future state. Orcagna's magnificent treatment of this theme is full of dignity.

Allied to this "morality" was the pageant of the Chariot of Death, wherein Death sits alone, in skeleton form, with a scythe in his hand. This skeleton form has eclipsed all others in representing Death as a person, and the scythe is his commonest attribute, though occasionally he bears the trident, the sickle, the spear, and a bow and arrows.

There is a powerful Eastern conception of Death, in the Vatopedi monastery on Mount Athos, where Death is a skeleton covered with a bright black skin with a sickle in his right hand and a scythe in the left, with which he mows down men; the inscription reads: "Fear the grave, Death comes near. Behold Charon." Charon in modern Greek folklore is not the ferryman, but the guide of souls, taking the place of Hermes, which, though altered, is a curious instance of the late survival in the East of pagan ideas.

The living skeleton, crowned or otherwise, has disintegrated on modern tombs into a skull and crossbones, and with the revival of Greek literature certain Greek symbols of death, such as the inverted torch, a broken urn, a withered wreath, have come to be used on nominally Christian tombs instead of emblems of Christianity.

At the Reformation, a clean sweep was made of all pictures suggestive of Catholic ideals. In the third year of the reign of Edward VI, an injunction was issued ordering all pictures in churches not already disturbed to be either destroyed or defaced; and it became illegal to possess, even privately, pictures of this forbidden nature. Those convicted of this crime were faced with large fines or even imprisonment. In 1558, after the accession of Queen Elizabeth I to the throne, the law was made increasingly more stringent, and the various church officers were required to declare their obedience to the law. As a result of the austere regulations, several of the walls of churches were whitewashed. However the abundance of blank walls appeared sterile and banal and therefore required a didactic substitution for the obliterated works. At this time the themes of 'Time' and 'Death' were often incorporated into the replacement works.

The Latin phrase '*memento mori*' (remember death) was a prevalent and recurring theme throughout art at this time. In classical terms, it referred to the transient nature of life and the proximity of death. Christianity also utilised this term to emphasise the idea of salvation and an afterlife in heaven, admonishing humanity of the brevity of life and therefore people should avoid fixating on material things.

The Vanitas art movement, a predominately Northern European late Renaissance movement, encompassed this idea through the use of still life paintings. The still life paintings themselves contained several images such as skulls, hourglasses, and rotten fruit to symbolise the fleeting nature of the universe. This idea was also applied to funerary art, cadaver tombs depicted morbid sculptures of the deceased on the actual sarcophagus itself.

Several of the symbols discussed within this chapter have continued to appear in modern and contemporary art. While the depth of their significance continues to morph over time, the symbols themselves are eternally recognisable, providing additional value to the art works.



William Blake, *Illustration from Dante's Divine Comedy:*
Antaeus Setting down Dante and Virgil in the Last
Circle of Hell (Inferno, XXXI, 112-134), 1824-1827.

Pen and ink and watercolour over pencil, sheet: 52.6 x 37.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Purgatory and Hell

As soon as reason is in fair possession of the idea of a continued individual existence beyond the grave, the moral sense, discriminating the deeds,

temper, and characters of men, would teach that there must be different allotments and experiences for them after death. It is not right, say reason and conscience, for the coward, the idler, fool, knave, sot, murderer, to enter into the same realm and have the same bliss with heroes, sages, and saints; neither are they able to do it. The spontaneous thought and sentiment of humanity would declare, if the soul survives the body, passing into the invisible world, its fortunes there must depend somewhat upon its fitness and deserts, its contained treasures and acquired habits. Reason, judging the facts of observation according to the principles of ethics and the working of experienced spiritual laws, at once decides that there is a difference hereafter between the fate of the good heart and the bad one, the great soul and the mean one: in a word, there is, in some sense or other, a heaven and a hell.

Again: the same belief would be necessitated by the conception, so deeply entertained by the ancient people of the earth, of overruling and inspecting gods. They supposed these gods to be in a great degree like themselves, partial, fickle, jealous, revengeful. Such beings, of course, would caress their favourites and torture their offenders. The calamities and blessings of this life were regarded as tokens, revengeful or loving, of the ruling deities. And when their votaries or victims had passed into the eternal state, how natural to suppose them still favoured or cursed by the passionate wills of these irresponsible gods! Plainly enough, they who believe in gods that launch thunderbolts and fortify the sea in their rage and take vengeance for an insult by sending forth plague, must also believe in a hell where Ixion may be affixed to the wheel and Tantalus be tortured with maddening mockeries. These two conceptions of discriminating justice and of vengeful gods both lead to the theoretic construction of a hell, and to the growth of doctrines and parables about it, though in a different sort, the former illustrating a pervasive law which distributes men according to their deserts, the latter speaking of beings with human passions, who inflict outward arbitrary penalties according to their pleasure.

A fundamental part of the ancient belief was that below the surface of the earth was a vast, sombre underworld, the destination of the ghosts of men, the Greek Hades, the Roman Orcus, the Gothic Hell. A part of the service of initiation was a symbolic descent into this realm. Apuleius, describing his initiation, says, "I approached to the confines of death and trod on the threshold of Proserpine." Orpheus, to whom the introduction of the Mysteries into Greece from the East was ascribed, wrote a poem, now lost, called the *Descent into Hades*. Such a descent was attributed to Hercules, Theseus, Rhampsinitus, and many others. It is painted in detail by Homer in the adventure of his hero Ulysses, also by Virgil much more minutely through the journey of Aneas. Warburton labours with great learning and plausibility, and, as it seems to us, with irresistible cogency, to show that these descents are less than exoteric accounts of what was dramatically enacted in the esoteric recesses of the Mysteries. Any person must be invincibly prejudiced who can

doubt that the Greek Hades meant a capacious subterranean world of shades. The Egyptians and some other early nations, we know, figured the starry worlds in the sky as ships sailing over a celestial sea. The earth itself was sometimes emblematised in the same way. Then, too, there was the sepulchral barge in which the Egyptian corpses were borne over the Acherusian lake to be entombed. Also the "dark blue punt" in which Charon ferried souls across the river of death. A wavering boat floating on the deep might, with striking fitness, typify the frail condition of humanity in life, as when Hercules is depicted sailing over the ocean in a golden cup; and that boat, safely riding the flood, might also represent the cheerful faith of the initiate in a future life, bearing him fearlessly through all dangers and through death to the welcoming society of Elysium, as when Danae and her babe, tossed over the tempestuous sea in a fragile chest, were securely wafted to the sheltering shore of Seriphus. No emblem of our human state and lot, with their mysteries, perils, threats, and promises, could be either more natural or more impressive than that of a vessel launched on the deep. The dying Socrates said "that he should trust his soul on the hope of a future life as upon a raft, and launch away into the unknown." Thus the imagination broods over and explores the shows and secrets, presageful warnings and alluring invitations, storms and calms, island homes and unknown havens, of the dim seas of nature and of man, of time and of eternity.

The general idea of a hell has once obtained lodgement, it is rapidly nourished, developed, and ornamented, carried out into particulars by poets, rhetoricians, and popular teachers, whose fancies are stimulated and whose figurative views and pictures act and react both upon the sources and the products of faith. Representations based only on moral facts, emblems addressing the imagination, after a while are received in a literal sense, become physically located and clothed with the power of horror. A Hindu poet says, "The ungrateful shall remain in hell as long as the sun hangs in heaven." An old Jewish Rabbi says that after the general judgment "God shall lead all the blessed through hell and all the damned through Paradise, and show to each one the place that was prepared for him in each region, so that they shall not be able to say, 'We are not to be blamed or praised; for our doom was unalterably fixed beforehand.'" Such utterances are originally moral symbols, not dogmatic assertions; and yet in a rude age they very easily pass into the popular mind as declaring facts literally to be believed. A Talmudic writer says, "There are in hell seven abodes, in each abode seven thousand caverns, in each cavern seven thousand clefts, in each cleft seven thousand scorpions; each scorpion has seven limbs, and on each limb are seven thousand barrels of gall. There are also in hell seven rivers of rankest poison, so deadly that if one touches it he bursts." Hesiod, Homer, Virgil, have given minute descriptions of hell and its agonies, descriptions which have unquestionably had a tremendous influence in cherishing and fashioning the world's faith in that awful empire. The poems of Dante, Milton, and

Pollok revel in the most vivid and terrific pictures of the infernal kingdom and its imagined horrors; and the popular doctrine of future punishment in Christendom is far more closely conformed to their revelations than to the declarations of the New Testament. The English poet's *Paradise Lost* has undoubtedly exerted an influence on the popular faith comparable with that of the Genevan theologian's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In addition, Joseph Trapp, an English clergyman, in a long poem thus sets forth the scene of damnation:

Doom'd to live death and never to expire;
In floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire
The damn'd shall groan, - fire of all kinds and forms,
In rain and hail, in hurricanes and storms,
Liquid and solid, livid, red, and pale,
A flaming mountain here, and there a flaming vale,
The liquid fire makes seas; the solid, shores:
Arch'd o'er with flames, the horrid concave roars.
In bubbling eddies rolls the fiery tide,
And sulphurous surges on each other ride.
The hollow winding vaults, and dens, and caves,
Bellow like furnaces with flaming waves.
Pillars of flame in spiral volumes rise,
Like fiery snakes, and lick the infernal skies.
Sulphur, the eternal fuel, unconsumed,
Vomits redounding smoke, thick, unillumed.

The Harrowing of Hell, for example the descent of Christ into Hades, and his leading forth the souls of the redeemed, was a natural and grateful relief to these dreadful imaginings. Christ, clothed in the white robe of Victory and bearing the cross of Triumph in His hand, stands in the radiance of His Glory within the gates of hell. The discomfited demons fly and howl at his approach; within the jaws of hell and Death a great company of souls headed by Adam and Eve, await with joy and adoration the advent of the Conqueror. The story of the event occurs in the Gospel of Nicodemus, as the narrative of Charinus and Lenthius, the sons of the Simeon of the *Nunc dimittis*, who were those who came out of their graves after the Crucifixion.

Representations of Paradise are not common in art. In pictures of Christ in Glory, the Trinity, the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin, and the Last Judgment, heaven is usually represented by circles of adoring angels, and outside these, the Apostles, Martyrs, Doctors, Fathers of the Church, holy men and women, seated on or surrounded by clouds. Fra Angelico is one of the few artists who have endeavoured to portray the "New Earth" which will be for the delectation of the faithful. He paints a flowery meadow with angels and saints hand in hand in sweetest fellowship seeming to circle with rhythmic movement over the flowery grass. Yet in representations of hell there are plenty of instances of how easily men's imaginations run to excess of horror and cruelty, rather than of beauty and happiness, for it is one of the commonest subjects in medieval art.

The commonest form of depicting hell was the mouth of a huge monster emitting flames. Bound and helpless souls are cast into it by demons, and are shown chained in it. Another form was that of a cauldron, or a lake of fire, with terrible demons in it. In a 13th century manuscript the ideas are combined, and a cauldron filled with souls is held in the mouth of a monster, while devils blow the flames.

The Islamic descriptions of the doom of the wicked and the torments of hell, copious and vivid, are constantly illustrated throughout the Qur'an, for example, the Day of Judgement is strikingly depicted in Chapter 56: "But those on the Left, what people they are! They will dwell amid scorching wind and scalding water in the shadow of black smoke, neither cool nor refreshing. Before they overindulged in luxury and persisted in great sin, always saying, 'What? When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then be raised up? And our earliest forefathers too?' Say [Prophet], 'The Earliest and latest generations will all be gathered on a predetermined Day and you have gone astray and denied the truth will eat from the bitter tree of Zaqqum, filling your bellies with it, and drinking scalding water, lapping it like thirsty camels. This will be your welcome on the Day of Judgement.'" [Qur'an 56:41-56]

The Romanist theologians divided the underworld into four parts: hell for the final abode of the stubbornly wicked; one limbo for the painless, contented tarrying of the good patriarchs who died before the advent of Christ had made salvation possible, and another limbo for the sad and pallid resting place of those children who died unbaptised; purgatory, in which expiation is offered in agony for sins committed on earth and unatoned for. Traces of belief in a purgatory early appear among the Christians. Many of the gravest Fathers of the first five centuries naturally conceived and taught, as is indeed intrinsically reasonable, that after death some souls will be punished for their sins until they are cleansed, and then will be released from pain. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* with a wonderful truth and feeling of the age in which it was written, best captures the medieval beliefs in future life especially within its illustrations of purgatory and hell.



Abû Ma'shar al-Balkhî,
The Book of Nativities (Kitab al-mawalid).
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.



Master of Catherine of Cleves, Miniature from the *Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves: The Mouth of Hell*, c. 1440.
 Utrecht. Illuminated manuscript, 19.2 x 13 cm.
 The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Faust, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
 translated by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

SCENE—The Country.—*A gloomy day*

FAUSTUS

*In sorrow! in despair! so long and piteously astray, and
 now in prison! That gentle, hapless creature, cast, like a
 worthless criminal, into a gloomy dungeon, and reserved*

*for horrid tortures! And is it come to this; to this—deluding,
treacherous demon! This then thou kept'st secret!
Aye, roll thy hideous eyes in devilish fury on me. Stand
there with thy insufferable front, and brave my anger. In
a dungeon! In hopeless wretchedness! To fiends abandoned
and her merciless human judges; and all this while
hast thou been lulling my attention with thy silly pastimes,
concealing from me her increasing woe, and leaving
her to perish unrelieved.*

MEPHISTOPHELES

She is not the first.

FAUSTUS

*Dog! horrible monster! Transform him, thou Eternal
Spirit! again transform the reptile to his canine form—
that form in which he crept across my path, rolling before
the harmless passenger, watching his stumbling steps and
clinging to his falling weight. Change him again into
his favourite shape, and let him creep before me on his
belly, that I may trample him beneath my feet into the
dust: the wretch! not the first! Oh! sorrow, sorrow—
beyond all human reason to conceive, that more than one
created being into so frightful an abyss of misery has been
plunged, and that the agonies that one endured, were not
in infinite mercy's sight a just atonement for the crimes
of all. The misery of this one victim harrows the sense
of life within me, and thou—thou lookest with fiendish
sneer upon the fate of thousands.*

MEPHISTOPHELES

*Now we are again at our wit's end, where Man's sense cracks.
Why didst thou make a compact with us, if thou cant not go
through with it? What, wouldst thou fly, and art not
proof 'gainst giddiness? Did we intrude on thee, or thou on us?*

FAUSTUS

*Gnash not thy hungry teeth at me! I hate thee. Powerful,
glorious spirit, who deign'dst to shew thyself to me,
who know'st my heart and soul, why bind me to this vile
associate, who feeds on mischief, and exults in ruin?*

MEPHISTOPHELES

Hast finished now?

FAUSTUS

*Save her, or woe betide thee! The curse of curses most
appalling light for a thousand years upon thee!*

MEPHISTOPHELES

*I cannot sever the avenger's bonds, or loose his bolts.
Save her? who was it plunged her into ruin—I or thou? [...]*

FAUSTUS

Take me to her. She shall, she must be free!

MEPHISTOPHELES

*And yet thy own danger—think of that? know that the
guilt of blood, thy hand bath shed, still rests upon the*

town. Above the grave, where lies the slain, avenging spirits hover and await the murderer's second coming.

FAUSTUS

That too from thee! the death and the destruction of a world, unholy fiend, light on thee! conduct me to her, I command thee, and release her.

MEPHISTOPHELES

I will conduct thee: hear what I can do! have I all power in heaven and earth? I will entrance the jailor's senses; do thou obtain the key, and, with thy mortal hand, from out the dungeon-walls 'convey her. I will be waiting near. The phantom-steeds, in readiness, shall bear you off. This I can do.

FAUSTUS

Away, then—to it.



Master of the Beatitude of the Virgin Mary,
The Last Judgement (detail), c. 1460-1480.
 Oil on wood, 57 x 40.5 cm. Stiftung Rau, Cologne.

SCENE—*The Prison.*

[...]

FAUSTUS (*unlocking the dungeon door*)
She dreams not that her love is listening near,
Hears the straw rustle, and the fetters clank. [He enters]

MARGARET (*striving to conceal herself in her straw-bed*)
Woe, woe! they come: oh! bitter, bitter death!

FAUSTUS (*softly*)

Hush, hush! 'tis I: I come to set you free.

MARGARET (*throwing herself before him*)

If thou art human, pity my distress.

FAUSTUS

You will alarm the slumbering jailors: hush!

[He lays hold of the fetters to unloose them]

MARGARET (*on her knees*)

Ruffian! who gave thee this authority,

To bear me off in the still hour of midnight.

Have mercy! let me live a little longer:

Will not the morning's dawn be time enough?

Am I too still so young—so young, and must I

Already die? Fair also was I once,

And that has been my ruin; then my love

Dwelt near me: now, alas! he's far away.

My garland is all torn, and every flower

Is scattered: nay, nay, seize me not so rudely!

[...]

FAUSTUS

Can I survive this sight of agony?

MARGARET

Thou see'st I'm in thy power—then let me only

Give suck to my poor babe: the whole night long

I pressed it to my bosom: 'twas stolen from me

To drive me mad, and now they say I kill'd it.

No more shall I know joy—no; they sing ballads

Upon me; 'tis unfeeling: there's an old song

Runs in that strain, how came they to apply it?

FAUSTUS (*falling upon his knees*)

Behold thy lover at thy feet, he comes

To break the heavy bonds of woe asunder.

MARGARET (*kneels by his side*)

O, let us kneel and supplicate the saints!

See, see! beneath these steps, beneath this threshold,

Hell rolls its fires; and, hark! the Evil One

Raves wrathfully, and horribly below.

FAUSTUS (*aloud*)

Margaret, Margaret!

MARGARET (*listens—then jumps up—the fetters fall of*)

[...]

Amid the howling and the din of hell,

Thru' fiends, dark taunts, and diabolic laughter,

I know those sweet, those soothing tones of love.

FAUSTUS

'Tis I!

MARGARET

*And is it thou? Say it again. [Embracing him]
'Tis he—'tis he—where are my torments now
Where is the dungeon's horrors, fetters' weight?
Thou'rt here; thou com'st to save me; I am saved.
[...]*

FAUSTUS *(striving to remove her)*

Come with me; come away.

MARGARET

*Oh! stay a little;
How willingly where thou art would I stay!*



Giovanni da Modena, *The Punishments of the Damned in Hell*, 1410.
Fresco, Basilica di San Petronio, Capella Bolognini, Bologna.



Hans Memling, Triptych: The Last Judgement
(centre panel), 1467-1471. Oil on wood,
221 x 160 cm. National Museum, Gdansk.

FAUSTUS

Haste; if thou hastenest not we both shall rue it.

MARGARET

*What, not one kiss! and hast thou then forgot
To kiss in this short absence from thy Margaret?
Why on thy bosom do I feel uneasy,
When once thy words, thy looks to me were heaven
Revealed? and then thou strovest to stop my breath
With kisses. Ah! thy lips are cold, are dumb;*

Where is thy love? ah! who has stolen it from me?

FAUSTUS

*Come, follow me, my love. Take courage, yet
I'll press thee to my heart a thousand times;
But only follow me, 'tis all I ask.*

MARGARET *(turning towards him again)*

And is it thou? art thou indeed my love?

FAUSTUS

I am; come on.

MARGARET

*Thou wilt strike off thy Margaret's cruel chains,
And take her to thy bosom. Shrink'st thou not
From my embrace? Knowest thou whom thou free'st?*

FAUSTUS

Come—come—the night already wanes; come on.

MARGARET

*I am my mother's murderer. I have drowned
My child.—Was it not thine as well as mine?—
Thine also. Art thou he?—I scarce believe it.
Give me thy hand. Is it no dream, in truth?
That hand so dear—but it is moist. Alas!
Wipe, wipe it off. Methinks there's blood upon it.
What bait thou done? For heaven's sake sheath that sword!*

FAUSTUS

Oh! let the past be past. Thou stabbest me.

MARGARET

*No: thou must stay, while I describe the graves
Which on the morrow thou must see prepared:
Give the best to my mother; next, my brother;
Myself aside—a little, not too far;
And on my right breast lay my infant, else
Will none rest near. To press me to thy heart
Were sweet, were happiness—but never more
Shall it be so to me. It seems as though
I forced my love upon thee, and thou strovest
My fondness to repel; and yet thou'rt he,
And hast the same kind gentle look as ever.*

FAUSTUS

Oh! if thou feelest all this, I pray thee come.

MARGARET

Whither?

FAUSTUS

To freedom.

MARGARET

*Ah! is the grave without? Does Death wait? come then,
From hence to everlasting rest, and not
One step beyond. Thou turn'st away. Oh! Henry,*

Would, would that I could go along with thee.

FAUSTUS

And if thou wilt thou canst; the door stands open.

MARGARET

I may not go, for me there is no hope.

Ah! what avails to fly—they wait to seize me.

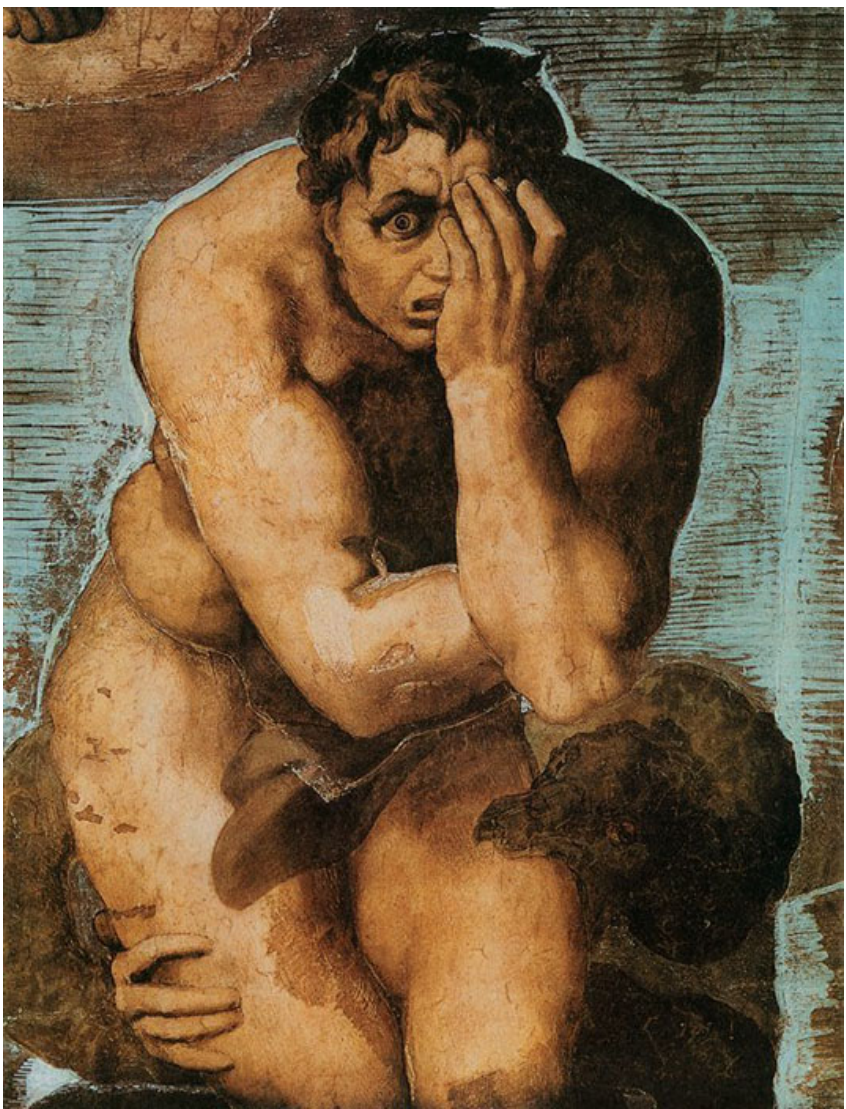
To be obliged to beg, and, conscience struck,

Roaming about through foreign lands to beg:

‘Tis wretchedness itself, and still they’ll seize me.

FAUSTUS

I will not move from thee.



Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*:
Damned Soul Descending into Hell (detail),
1536-1541. Fresco, 1375 x 1220 cm.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

MARGARET

*Quick, quick! Away!
Save thy poor child. Fly hence; away—away
Up yonder by the brook: beyond the stile,
Deep in the wood, there where thou see'st the plank
Across the pool. Oh! snatch it out at once.
It strives to rise;—it struggles still—save—save it!*

FAUSTUS

Collect thyself. One step, and thou art free.

MARGARET

*Would we were past that hill! my mother there
Is sitting on a stone. How cold it is!
There on a stone my mother sits, and shakes
Her grey head towards me—now she beckons not,
Nor nods—her head seems heavy—long she slept—
She wakes no more. She slept while we were happy.
Oh! those were blissful times.*

FAUSTUS

*If no entreaties and no words will move thee,
I needs must force thee hence.*

MARGARET

*Release me! no,
I will not suffer force; then seize me not
With cruel murderous hands: for love of thee
I did all this.*

FAUSTUS

Day dawns! my love, my love!

MARGARET

*Day? yes, 'tis day: the last day passes on—
My bridal-day it should have been. Tell none
That thou wert here with Margaret. Ah! my garland,
It is quite withered:—we will meet again;
Not at the dance:—the crowd assembles close—
Nothing is heard—the square, the streets, will scarce
Contain them;—'tis the bell that sounds—the staff
Is broke asunder—how they seize and bind me—
They bear me to the scaffold—every neck
Feels the sharp sword, as now it falls on mine:
'Tis silent now, as silent as the grave.*

FAUSTUS

O that I never had been born!

MEPHISTOPHELES (appearing at the door)

*Come on, or you are lost.
How useless is this trembling and delay,
And idle prate: my horses shiver yonder.
Already does the morning's dawn appear.*

MARGARET

*What rises from the earth?—that being! he!
Send him away. What is his purpose here,
On consecrated ground? He comes for me.*

FAUSTUS

Thou shalt live.

MARGARET

I yield to thee, O God! and to thy judgment.

MEPHISTOPHELES (to Faustus)

Come—come—or I abandon thee to her

And ruin.

MARGARET

Thine am I, heavenly Father! save me, save me!

Ye angels, and ye hosts of saints, surround—

Protect me! Henry, now you make me tremble.

MEPHISTOPHELES

She is judged.

A VOICE *(from above).*

She is saved.

MEPHISTOPHELES *(to Faustus)*

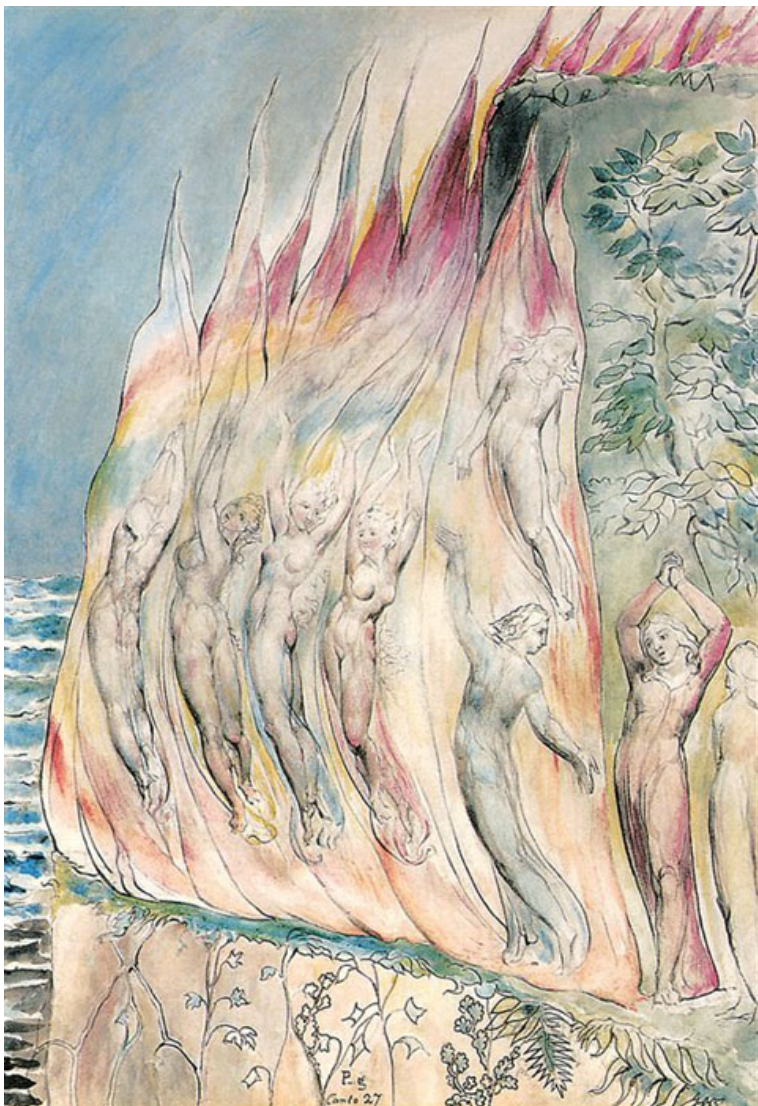
Come here with me. [Vanishes with Faustus]

A VOICE *(heard from within).*

Henry! Henry!



Luca Signorelli, *The Damned Cast into Hell* (detail),
c. 1499-1505. Fresco, Capella San Brizio, Orvieto.



William Blake, Illustration from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:
Dante at the moment of entering the fire
 (*Inferno* XXVII, 46-48), 1824-1827. Pen and ink
 and watercolour over black chalk and pencil,
 52.8 x 36.9 cm (sheet). National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

DANTE'S PURGATORY

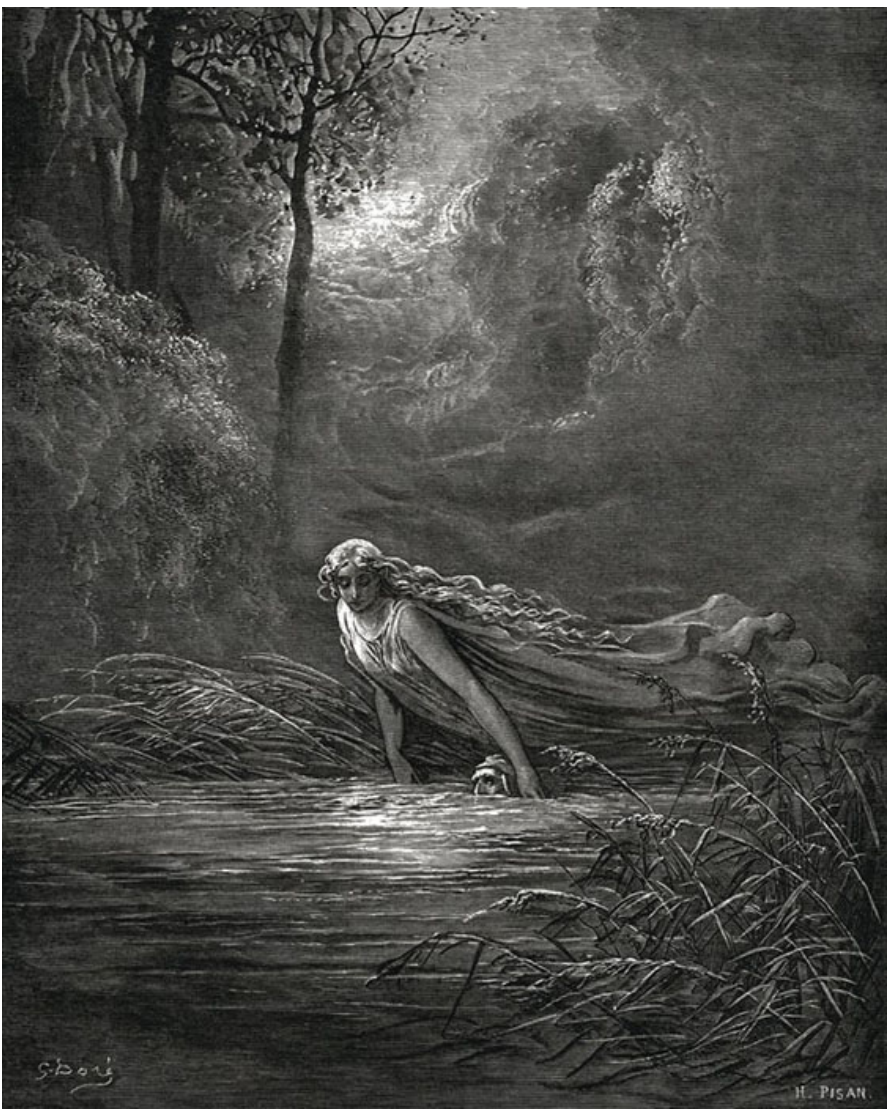
CANTO XXVII

*Now was the sun so station'd, as when first
 His early radiance quivers on the heights,*

Where stream'd his Maker's blood, while *Libra* hangs
Above *Hesperian* *Ebro*, and new fires
Meridian flash on *Ganges*' yellow tide.
So day was sinking, when the' angel of God
Appear'd before us. Joy was in his mien.
Forth of the flame he stood upon the brink,
And with a voice, whose lively clearness far
Surpass'd our human, "Blessed are the pure
In heart," he sang: then near him as we came,
"Go ye not further, holy spirits!" he cried,
"Ere the fire pierce you: enter in; and list
Attentive to the song ye hear from thence."
I, when I heard his saying, was as one
Laid in the grave. My hands together clasp'd,
And upward stretching, on the fire I look'd,
And busy fancy conjur'd up the forms
Erewhile beheld alive consum'd in flames.
Th' escorting spirits turn'd with gentle looks
Toward me, and the *Mantuan* spake: "My son,
Here torment thou mayst feel, but canst not death.
Remember thee, remember thee, if I
Safe e'en on *Geryon* brought thee: now I come
More near to God, wilt thou not trust me now?
Of this be sure: though in its womb that flame
A thousand years contain'd thee, from thy head
No hair should perish. If thou doubt my truth,
Approach, and with thy hands thy vesture's hem
Stretch forth, and for thyself confirm belief.
Lay now all fear, O lay all fear aside.
Turn hither, and come onward undismay'd."
I still, though conscience urg'd, no step advanc'd.
When still he saw me fix'd and obstinate,
Somewhat disturb'd he cried: "Mark now, my son,
From *Beatrice* thou art by this wall
Divided." As at *Thisbe*'s name the eye
Of *Pyramus* was open'd (when life ebb'd
Fast from his veins), and took one parting glance,
While vermeil dyed the mulberry; thus I turn'd
To my sage guide, relenting, when I heard
The name, that springs forever in my breast.
He shook his forehead; and, "How long," he said,
"Linger we now?" then smil'd, as one would smile
Upon a child, that eyes the fruit and yields.
Into the fire before me then he walk'd;
And *Statius*, who erewhile no little space
Had parted us, he pray'd to come behind.
I would have cast me into molten glass
To cool me, when I enter'd; so intense
Rag'd the conflagrant mass. The sire below'd,
To comfort me, as he proceeded, still
Of *Beatrice* talk'd. "Her eyes," saith he,
"E'en now I seem to view." From the other side
A voice, that sang, did guide us, and the voice
Following, with heedful ear, we issued forth,
There where the path led upward. "Come," we heard,
"Come, blessed of my Father." Such the sounds,
That hail'd us from within a light, which shone
So radiant, I could not endure the view.
"The sun," it added, "hastes: and evening comes."

*Delay not: ere the western sky is hung
With blackness, strive ye for the pass.” Our way
Upright within the rock arose, and fac’d
Such part of heav’n, that from before my steps
The beams were shrouded of the sinking sun.*

— *Dante’s Purgatory, Canto XXVII, lines 1-66*



Gustave Doré, Illustration from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:
Submersion in Lethe (*Purgatory*, XXXI, 100-102),
 1857/ printed 1890. Engraving.

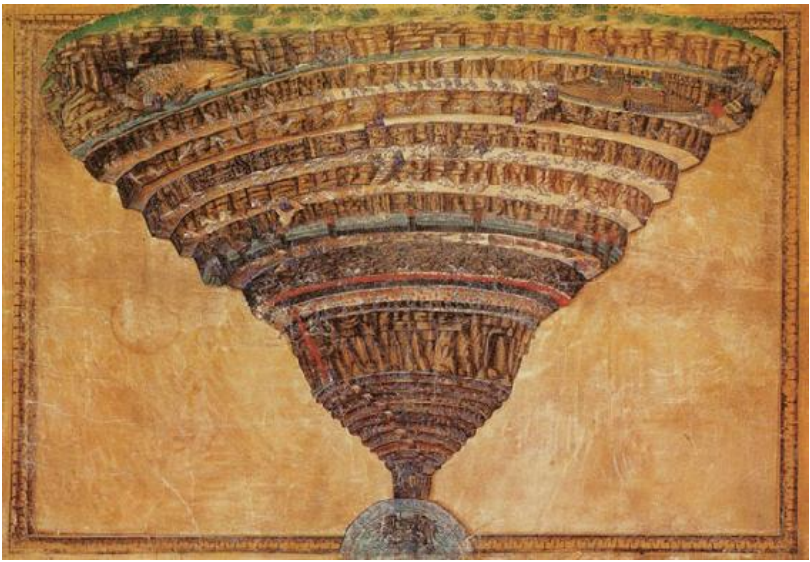
CANTO XXXI

*I stood, as children silent and asham'd
 Stand, list'ning, with their eyes upon the earth,
 Acknowledging their fault and self-condemn'd.
 And she resum'd: "If, but to hear thus pains thee,
 Raise thou thy beard, and lo! what sight shall do!"
 With less reluctance yields a sturdy holm,
 Rent from its fibres by a blast, that blows*

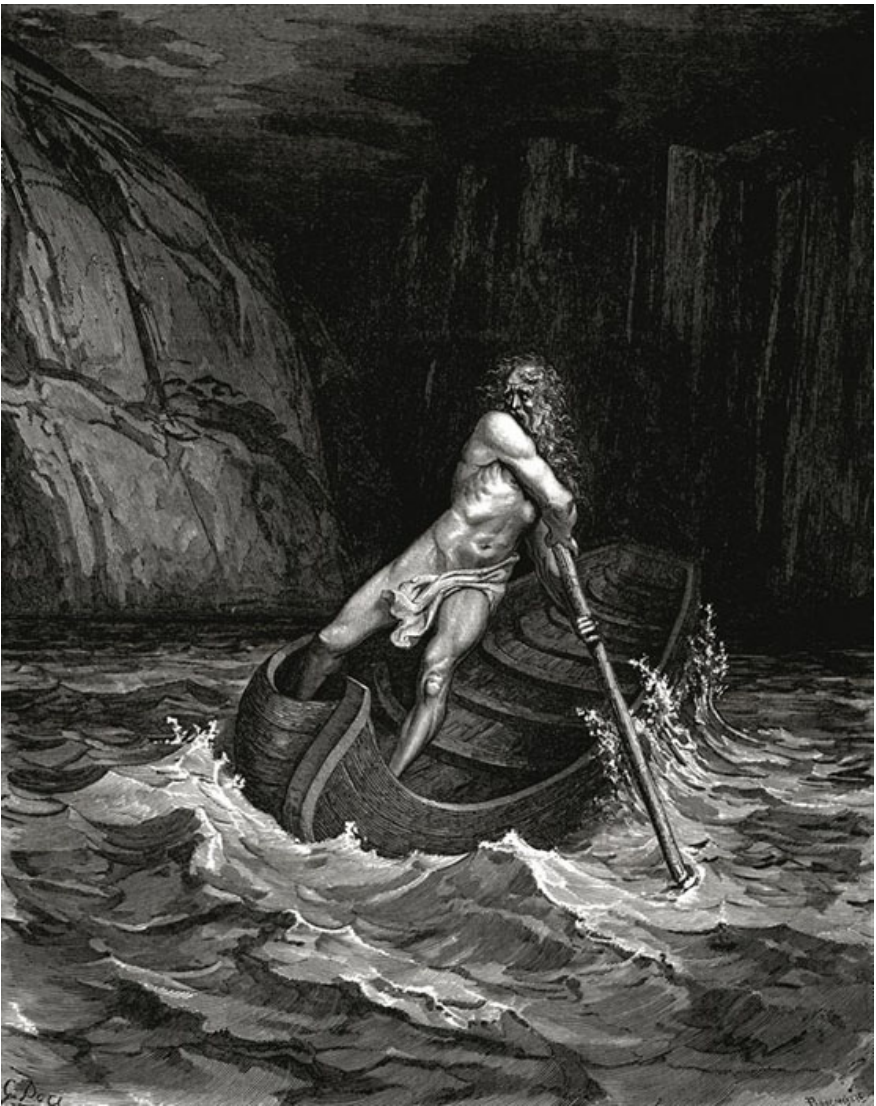
From off the pole, or from Iarbas' land,
Than I at her behest my visage rais'd:
And thus the face denoting by the beard,
I mark'd the secret sting her words convey'd.
No sooner lifted I mine aspect up,
Than downward sunk that vision I beheld
Of goodly creatures vanish; and mine eyes
Yet unassur'd and wavering, bent their light
On Beatrice. Towards the animal,
Who joins two natures in one form, she turn'd,
And, even under shadow of her veil,
And parted by the verdant rill, that flowed
Between, in loveliness appear'd as much
Her former self surpassing, as on earth
All others she surpass'd. Remorseful goads
Shot sudden through me. Each thing else, the more
Its love had late beguil'd me, now the more
I Was loathsome. On my heart so keenly smote
The bitter consciousness, that on the ground
O'erpower'd I fell: and what my state was then,
She knows who was the cause. When now my strength
Flow'd back, returning outward from the heart,
The lady, whom alone I first had seen,
I found above me. "Loose me not," she cried:
"Loose not thy hold; "and lo! had dragg'd me high
As to my neck into the stream, while she,
Still as she drew me after, swept along,
Swift as a shuttle, bounding o'er the wave.
The blessed shore approaching then was heard
So sweetly, "Tu asperges me," that I
May not remember, much less tell the sound.
The beauteous dame, her arms expanding, clasp'd
My temples, and immerg'd me, where 't was fit
The wave should drench me: and thence raising up,
Within the fourfold dance of lovely nymphs
Presented me so lav'd, and with their arm
They each did cover me. "Here are we nymphs,
And in the heav'n are stars. Or ever earth
Was visited of Beatrice, we
Appointed for her handmaids, tended on her.
We to her eyes will lead thee; but the light
Of gladness that is in them, well to scan,
Those yonder three, of deeper ken than ours,
Thy sight shall quicken." Thus began their song;
And then they led me to the Gryphon's breast,
While, turn'd toward us, Beatrice stood.
"Spare not thy vision. We have stationed thee
Before the emeralds, whence love erewhile
Hath drawn his weapons on thee." As they spake,
A thousand fervent wishes rivited
Mine eyes upon her beaming eyes, that stood
Still fix'd toward the Gryphon motionless.
As the sun strikes a mirror, even thus
Within those orbs the twofold being shone,
For ever varying, in one figure now
Reflected, now in other. Reader! muse
How wond'rous in my sight it seem'd to mark
A thing, albeit steadfast in itself,
Yet in its imag'd semblance mutable.

*Full of amaze, and joyous, while my soul
Fed on the viand, whereof still desire
Grows with satiety, the other three
With gesture, that declar'd a loftier line,
Advanc'd: to their own carol on they came
Dancing in festive ring angelical.*

— *Dante's Purgatory, Canto XXXI, lines 62-134*



Sandro Botticelli, Illustration for Dante's *Divine Comedy*: *The Abyss of Hell (Inferno, XI)*, c. 1403. Preliminary sketch with silverpoint on parchment, retraced in ink and coloured, 33 x 47.5 cm. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

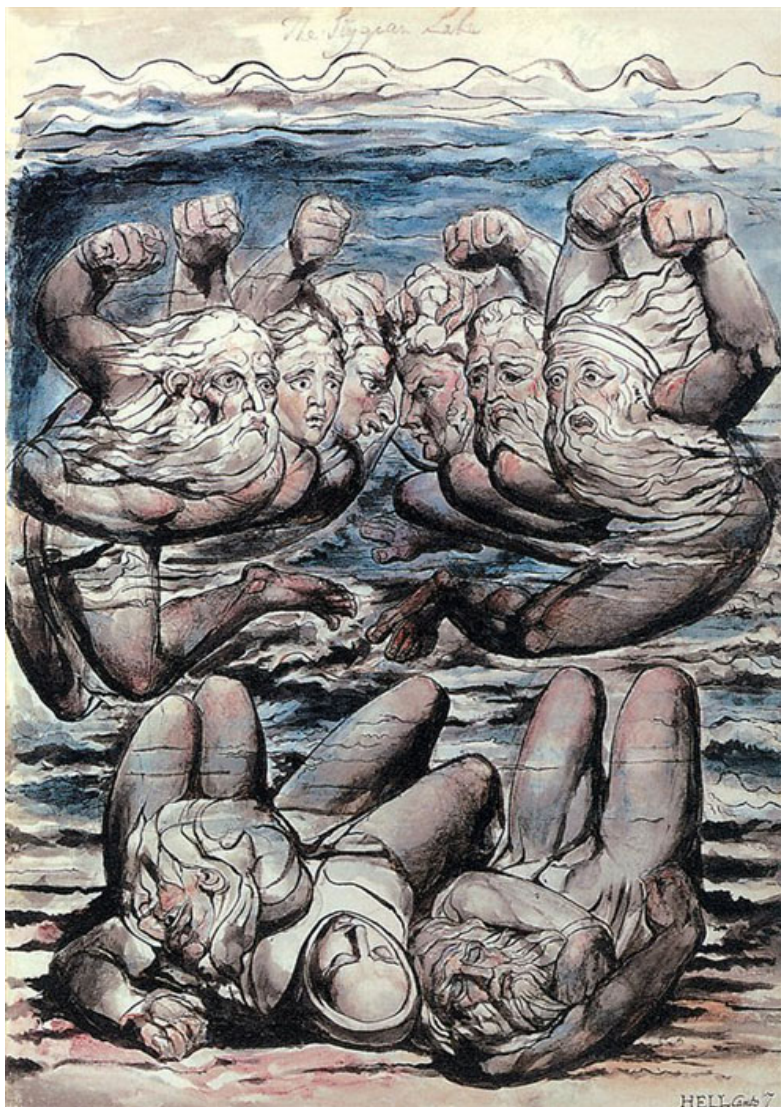


Gustave Doré, *Illustration of Dante's Divine Comedy:
Charon and the River Acheron (Inferno, III),*
1857/ printed 1890. Engraving.
Bibliothèque des Arts décoratifs, Paris.

*Then with eyes downward cast, and fill'd with shame,
Fearing my words offensive to his ear,
Till we had reach'd the river, I from speech
Abstain'd. And, lo! toward us in a bark
Comes on an old man, hoary white with eld,
Crying, "Woe to you, wicked spirits I hope not
Ever to see the sky again. I come
To take you to the other shore across,
Into eternal darkness, there to dwell*

*In fierce heat and in ice. And thou, who there
 Standest, live spirit! get thee hence, and leave
 These who are dead." But soon as he beheld
 I left them not, "By other way," said he,
 "By other haven shalt thou come to shore,
 Not by this passage; thee a nimbler boat
 Must carry." Then to him thus spake my guide:
 "Charon I thyself torment not: so 'tis will'd,
 Where will and power are one: ask thou no more."
 Straightway in silence fell the shaggy cheeks
 Of him, the boatman o'er the livid lake,
 Around whose eyes glared wheeling flames. Meanwhile
 Those spirits, faint and naked, colour changed,
 And gnash'd their teeth, soon as the cruel words
 They heard. God and their parents they blasphemed,
 The human kind, the place, the time, and seed,
 That did engender them and give them birth.
 Then all together sorely wailing drew
 To the curst strand, that every man must pass
 Who fears not God. Charon, demoniac form,
 With eyes of burning coal, collects them all,
 Beckoning, and each, that lingers, with his oar
 Strikes. As fall off the light autumnal leaves,
 One still another following, till the bough
 Strews all its honours on the earth beneath;
 E'en in like manner Adam's evil brood
 Cast themselves, one by one, down from the shore,
 Each at a beck, as falcon at his call.
 Thus go they over through the umber'd wave;
 And ever they on the opposing bank
 Be landed, on this side another throng
 Still gathers. "Son," thus spake the courteous guide,
 "Those who die subject to the wrath of God
 All here together come from every clime,
 And to o'erpass the river are not loth:
 For so Heaven's justice goads them on, that fear
 Is turned into desire. Hence ne'er hath past
 Good spirit. If of thee Charon complain,
 Now mayst thou know the import of his words."
 This said, the gloomy region trembling shook
 So terribly, that yet with clammy dews
 Fear chills my brow. The sad earth gave a blast.
 That, lightning, shot forth a vermilion flame,
 Which all my senses conquer'd quite, and I
 Down dropp'd, as one with sudden slumber seized.*

— Dante's *Inferno*, Canto III lines 76-126



William Blake, Illustration from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:
The Stygian Lake, with the Ireful Sinners Fighting
(Inferno, VII, 106-126), 1824-1827. Pen, ink and
 watercolour over pencil, 52.7 x 37.1 cm.
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

He thus: "Oh, beings blind I what ignorance
 Besets you I Now my judgment hear and mark.
 He, whose transcendent wisdom passes all.
 The heavens creating, gave them ruling powers
 To guide them; so that each part shines to each.
 Their light in equal distribution pour'd.
 By similar appointment he ordain'd,
 Over the world's bright images to rule,

Superintendence of a guiding hand
 And general minister, which, at due time.
 May change the empty vantages of life
 From race to race; from one to other's blood,
 Beyond prevention of man's wisest care:
 Wherefore one nation rises into sway,
 Another languishes, e'en as her will
 Decrees, from us conceal 'd, as in the grass
 The serpent train. Against her nought avails
 Your utmost wisdom. She with foresight plans,
 Judges, and carries on her reign, as theirs
 The other powers divine. Her changes know
 None intermission, by necessity
 She is made swift, so frequent come who claim
 Succession in her favours. This is she,
 So execrated e'en by those whose debt
 To her is rather praise: they wrongfully
 With blame requite her, and with evil word;
 But she is blessed, and for that reckes not:
 Amidst the other primal beings glad.
 Rolls on her sphere, and in her bliss exults.
 Now on our way pass we, to heavier woe
 Descending: for each star is falling now,
 That mounted at our entrance, and forbids
 Too long our tarrying." We the circle cross'd
 To the next steep, arriving at a well.
 That boiling pours itself down to a fosse
 Sluiced from its source. Far murkier was the wave
 Than sablest grain: and we in company
 Of the inky waters, journeying by their side.
 Enter'd, though by a different track, ' beneath.
 Into a lake, the Stygian named, expands
 The dismal stream, when it hath reach'd the foot
 Of the grey wither'd cliffs. Intent I stood
 To gaze, and in the marish sunk descried
 A miry tribe, all naked, and with looks
 Betokening rage. They with their hands alone
 Struck not, but with the head, the breast, the feet,
 Cutting each other piecemeal with their fangs.
 The good instructor spake: "Now seest thou, son,
 The souls of those whom anger overcame.
 This too for certain know, that underneath
 The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
 Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
 As thine eye tells thee wheresoever it turn.
 Fix'd in the slime, they say, ' Sad once were we.
 In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun.
 Carrying a foul and lazy mist within:
 Now in these murky settlings are we sad.'
 Such dolorous strain they gurgle in their throats.
 But word distinct can utter none." Our route
 Thus compass'd we, a segment widely stretch'd
 Between the dry embankment, and the core
 Of the loath'd pool, turning meanwhile our eyes
 Downward on those who gulp'd its muddy lees;
 Nor stopp'd, till to a tower's low base we came.



Ary Sheffer, *Francesca of Rimini and Paolo Malatesta seen by Dante and Virgil*, 1854.
Oil on canvas, 57.7 x 81.3 cm.
Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



Eugène Delacroix, *The Barque of Dante*
(*Dante and Virgil in Hell*), 1822.
Oil on canvas, 189 x 241 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Gustave Doré, Illustration of Dante's *Divine Comedy*:
The Styx-Filippo Argenti, (Inferno, VIII),
 1857/ printed 1890. Engraving.

While we our course o'er the dead channel held.
 One drench'd in mire before me came, and said;
 "Who art thou, that thou comest ere thine hour?"
 I answer'd: "Though I come, I tarry not;
 But who art thou, that art become so foul?"
 "One, as thou seest, who mourn," he straight replied.
 To which I thus: "In mourning and in woe,
 Curs'd spirit! tarry thou. I know thee well,
 E'en thus in filth disguised." Then stretch'd he forth
 Hands to the barque; whereof my teacher sage

Aware, thrusting him back: "Away! down there
To the other dogs!" then, with his arms my neck
Encircling, kiss'd my cheek, and spake: "Oh soul,
Justly disdainful! blest was she in whom
Thou wast conceived, He in the world was one
For arrogance noted: to his memory
No virtue lends its lustre; even so
Here is his shadow furious. There above,
How many now hold themselves mighty kings,
Who here like swine shall wallow in the mire,
Leaving behind them horrible dispraise."
I then: "Master! him fain would I behold
Whelm'd in these dregs, before we quit the lake."
He thus: "Or ever to thy view the shore
Be offer'd, satisfied shall be that wish,
Which well deserves completion." Scarce his words
Were ended, when I saw the miry tribes
Set on him with such violence, that yet
For that render I thanks to God, and praise.
"To Filippo Argentill!" cried they all:
And on himself the moody Florentine
Turn'd his avenging fangs. Him here we left,
Nor speak I of him more. But on mine ear
Sudden a sound of lamentation smote.
Whereat mine eye unbarr'd I sent abroad.
And thus the good instructor: "Now, my son
Draws near the city, that of Dis is named,
With its grave denizens, a mighty throng."
I thus: "The minarets already, sir!
There, certes, in the valley I descry,
Gleaming vermilion, as if they from fire
Had issued." He replied: "Eternal fire.
That inward burns, shows them with ruddy flame
Illumed; as in this nether hell thou seest."
We came within the fosses deep, that moat
This region comfortless. The walls appear'd
As they were framed of iron. We had made
Wide circuit, ere a place we reach'd, where loud
The mariner cried vehement, "Go forth:
The entrance is here." Upon the gates I spied
More than a thousand, who of old from heaven
Were shower'd. With ireful gestures, "Who is this,"
They cried, "that, without death first felt, goes through
The regions of the dead?" My sapient guide
Made sign that he for secret parley wish'd;
Whereat their angry scorn abating, thus
They spake: "Come thou alone; and let him go,
Who hath so hardily enter'd this realm.
Alone return he by his witless way;
If well he know it, let him prove. For thee,
Here shalt thou tarry, who through clime so dark
Hast been his escort." Now bethink thee, reader I
What cheer was mine at sound of those curst words.
I did believe I never should return.
"Oh, my loved guide I who more than seven times
Security hast render'd me, and drawn
From peril deep, whereto I stood exposed,
Desert me not." I cried, "in this extreme.
And, if our onward going be denied,

*Together trace we back our steps with speed.”
My liege, who thither had conducted me,
Replied: “Fear not: for of our passage none
Hath power to disappoint us, by such high
Authority permitted. But do thou
Expect me here; meanwhile, thy wearied spirit
Comfort, and feed with kindly hope, assured
I will not leave thee in this lower world.”*

— *Dante’s Inferno, Canto VIII, lines 30-107*



Correggio (Antonio Allegri da Correggio),
Assumption of the Virgin, 1526-1530. Fresco,
1093 x 1195 cm. Cathedral of Parma (Duomo), Parma.

Heaven

Heaven, according to mankind, has generally been conceived as a definite, exclusive, material place. It is considered to be either some celestial clime on the surface of the earth, a happy island beyond the setting sun, or this whole globe, renovated by fire and peopled with a risen and ransomed race. Heaven

seemed to be a calm spot in the sky, curtained with inaccessible splendour and crowded with eternal blessings. It was natural that men should think of heaven as a place where all the evils which they knew were excluded and where all the good they knew were carried to the highest honour with God himself visibly enthroned in entrancing glory amidst throngs of worshippers.

This was unavoidable, because before knowledge and reflection had trained men to practice critical examination and the correction of their instinctive conclusions, all the data which they possessed would naturally lead them to imagine the unknown God in a glorified form and any evidence of the most enviable being their experience had yet revealed to them. The end goal was to paint the unknown future state of perfected souls under the purest aspects of the most desirable boons that they had known in their present state as it was a necessity of their uncritical minds to personify a definite image of God, and to portray heaven as an external place. They could not do anything but work out the results by means of their most intense experiences and the most impressive imagery familiar to them. Their highest notion of man, purified and expanded to the utmost, would be their idea of God. The grandest living conditions in existence within their realm of observation, enhanced by the absence of any illness, would form their visions of heaven. Both would be outward, definite, local, and, as it were, tangible. Royal courts with their pomp of power and luxury, priestly temples, with their exclusive sanctity, their awe-inspiring secrets, their processions and anthems would inevitably furnish the prevailing casts and colours to the dogmas and the scenery of early religion. What were the most vivid of all the experiences men had on earth? The exhibitions of the sultan with his gorgeous ceremonial state, the high priest with the dread sacrifice and homage he paid amidst clouds of incense and rolling waves of song; the admission of the favoured, in glittering robes, to share the privileges; the exclusion of the profane and vulgar in squalid misery and outer darkness. Consequently, except by a miracle, these sights did not fail to constitute the visible proofs for the popular beliefs concerning God and heaven. What should men reflect on as their own personal ideals if not the most coveted ingredients and the most impressive forms known? The best option, supposedly, would be to be to gain the personal favour of the supreme Sovereign by some artifice, flattery, or fortunate compliance with his arbitrary caprice, and to be welcomed into the charmed enclosure of his abode by some special grace, some sort of authoritative pass or magical art.

Greeks and Romans gradually came to believe in the idea of heaven as an aristocratic doctrine in which a select class of souls were promised an extravagant abode in the sky as their distinguished destination after death; the common masses were still sentenced to the underworld below the grave. Virgil wrote that "the descent into Avernus is easy. The gate of darkness is open day and night. But to rise into the upper world is most arduous. Only a few heroes who are favoured by Jupiter, whose love or shining virtue helps and exalts them can obtain it. Numerous scattered, significant traces of a

belief in this change of the destination of souls from the pit of Hades to the hall of heaven are found in many references by the classic authors. Virgil, celebrating the death of someone under the fictitious name of Daphnis, exclaims, "robed in white, he admires the strange court of heaven, and sees the clouds and the stars beneath his feet. He is a god now." Porphyrios declares to Pythagoras that the souls of departed men are gathered in the zodiac. Plato earnestly describes a region of brightness and unfading realities above this lower world, among the stars, where the gods live. He attests that the virtuous and wise may ascend while the corrupt and ignorant must sink into the Tartarean realm. A similar conception of the attainability of heaven seems to be suggested in old popular myths. First, the story of Hercules coming back in triumph from his visit to Pluto's seat, and, upon dying, rising to the assembly of immortals and taking his equal place among them. Secondly, when Dionysus goes into the underworld and rescues his mother, the hapless Semele, and soars with her to heaven where she henceforth resides, a peeress of the eldest goddesses. Cicero expresses the same mindset when he affirms that "a life of justice and piety is the path to heaven, where patriots, exemplary souls, released from their bodies, enjoy endless happiness amidst the brilliant orbs of the galaxy." He also speaks of certain philosophers who flourished before his time, "whose opinions encouraged the belief that souls departing from bodies would arrive in heaven as their proper dwelling place." He then stigmatises the notion that life succeeding death is subterranean as an error, and in his own name addresses his auditor thus: "I see you gazing upward and wishing to migrate into heaven." It was the common belief of the Romans for ages that Romulus was taken up into heaven, where he would remain forever, claiming divine honours. The Emperor Julian said, in his Letter on the Duties of a Priest that "God will raise, from darkness of the Tartarus, the souls of all of us who worship him sincerely: to the pious, instead of Tartarus he promises Olympus." "It is lawful," writes Plato, "only for the true lover of wisdom to pass into the rank of gods." "To pass into the rank of the gods" is a phrase which, as it is employed here, means to ascend into heaven and have a seat with the immortals, instead of being banished with the souls of common mortals to the underworld.

In every form of being and in any portion of the universe, the central idea of a state of salvation is the fulfilment of the will of the Creator in the faculties of his creation. The achievement of the ends of the whole in the consciousness of the part is integral to the congruity of the forces of the soul with the requirements of its situation. If this definition is accepted, it is clear that no mere place of residence, however excellent, can be heaven. That is but one factor of heaven, and worthless without a corresponding factor of a spiritual kind. Essentially, heaven is a divine experience, not a divine location; yet constructively it should be both. Ever so serene and pure a space, perfectly free from every sin or illness, and surrounded with all the outer provisions of

power and order, heaven did not exist until a prepared soul entered it, furnishing the spiritual conditions for the forces to run into attainment, for the melody of blissful being to play. The material elements of the universe, so far as we know, are unconscious dynamics. However perfectly marshalled, they cannot compose a heaven by themselves. So the conscious soul, as far as we know, is incapable of an independent and unrelated existence in itself. All its experience, when ultimately analysed, is the result of the mutual relations between its own energies and capacities and the forms and forces of things outside of itself. When there is a correct arrangement of realities in the residence, the development of faculties and affections, and an adjustment of the spiritual states with the surrounding conditions, that, as these act and react upon each other, the laws of the universe break into conscious harmony, or the will of God is realised in a life of blessedness; that harmony, that blessedness, is what we mean by heaven; and the conditions of its realisation constitute the law of salvation.

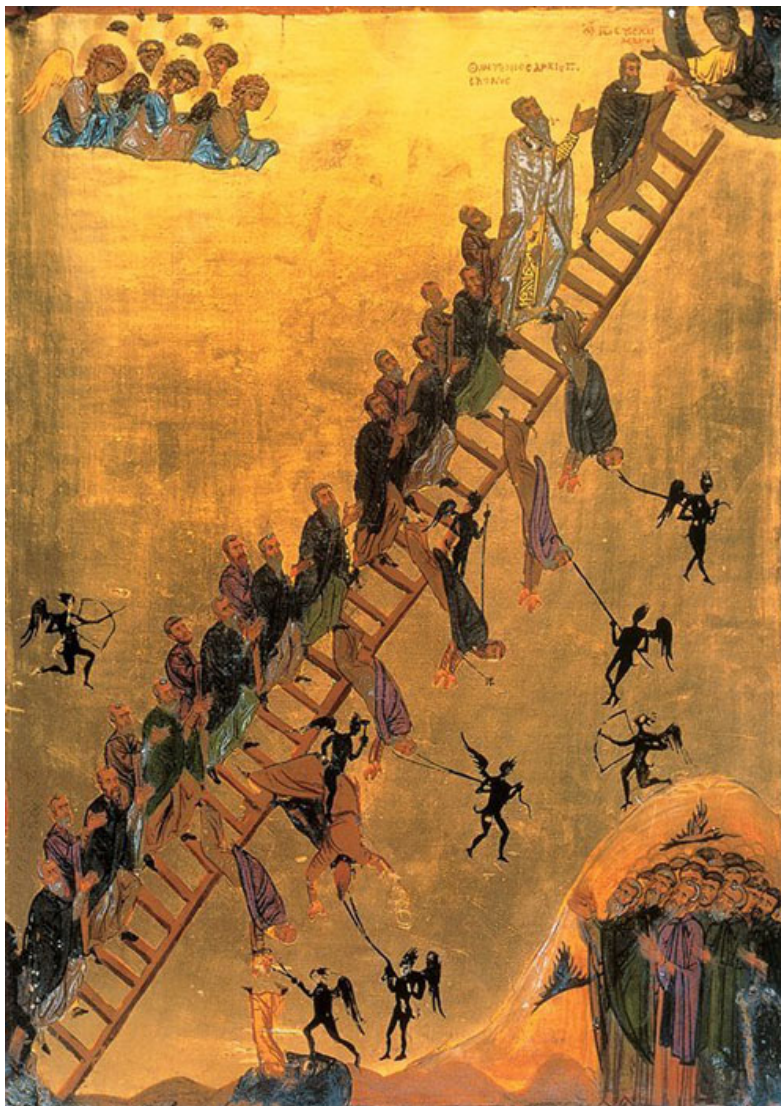
Such being the true idea of heaven, obviously, it cannot be limited to any particular locality. It may be here, elsewhere, anywhere, everywhere, before death, in death, after death; whenever and wherever the proper conditions meet inward state and outward circumstances so adjusted as to produce an experience which fulfils the will of God and realises the end of the creation. Hereafter this may be, as we know it now on earth, a spiritual fruition in material conditions, or it may be something altered in accordance with the varying exigencies of worlds whose details are as yet inconceivable by us, altogether hidden behind the veil of futurity and our ignorance. But its one fundamental condition, its eternal essence under all circumstances which can possibly happen, must always be the same. Whatever changes await the soul, embodied in a new form in the state after death, or remaining in pure disembodiment; whatever be the relation of the immaterial entity of mind to the circumference and contents of its new home, it can be in paradise, it can command peace and bliss, or any equivalent of these terms, only by the fulfilment of the will of God in its being. Heaven is, therefore, the reconciliation and unison of the soul with its divinely appointed lot, the identification of the ideal and the real.

Although the essential element in the idea of heaven is forever the same, it may be regarded in three different aspects or on three different scales as an individual experience, as a social state, and as a far off universal event. Heaven, as a private experience, is the harmonised intercourse of the soul with the divineness in its surrounding conditions. Heaven, as a public society, is the blessed communion of blessed souls, a complete adjustment of the lives of kindred natures. Heaven, as a final consummation, is the publication of the vindicated will of God in the total harmony of the universe, all individual wills, so many separate notes blended into the collective consonance of the whole.

But, for all practical purposes, we may overlook this triple distinction and

think of heaven simply as the correspondence of the life of the soul with those outward conditions which represent the will of God. And towards this conclusion everything, in its profoundest and most persistent tendency, is bearing. In spite of interruptions and seeming exceptions, it is towards this that the entire confluence of forces and beings gravitates and slowly advances. The universal law of evolution, in which a scientific philosophy has generalised its most comprehensive induction, is but a history and prophecy of the progress towards a moving equilibrium of the totality of worlds and intelligences, which can eventuate only in a universal heaven, or unimpeded completion of the creative design.

Do we not see all creatures tending towards the perfection of their respective types, every improvement selectively taken up and carried on, every deteriorating deviation eliminated, all errors and failures doomed to perish or change into new conditions for more hopeful attempts? This confirms the faith first based on the deeper argument. For, since the will of God is the one persistent reality, the one all evolving and all inclusive power of which evil is only the distorted and shadowy negation, that opposition to the will of God which constitutes sin and misery, that discord with him which generates hell, must prove an ever smaller accompaniment of his plan, a transitory phenomenon ceasing in even degree with the spreading conquests of his almighty purpose, as race on race of creatures, and system on system of worlds, sweep into the victorious harmony, until the boundless realm of being shall be boundless heaven.



John Climacus, *Icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent*,
late 12th century. Paint on wood, 41.1 x 29.5 cm.
Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai.



Fra Angelico, *The Coronation of the Virgin*, 1435.
 Tempera on wood, 112 x 114 cm.
 Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Heaven, then, in essence, is not merely a favoured locality, not merely a resigned soul, but the result of a combination of these in a just relation. It is neither a playing power in the material environment nor an inherent attribute of the spiritual instrument; but it is the music which flows from the instrument when it is attuned to react in coordination with the acting environment. Salvation, consequently, is not simply a divine place of abode, not simply a divine state of soul; but it is these two conjoined. It is the experimental deposit between the two poles of rightly ordered conditions in the realm and rightly directed energies in the inhabitant. Heaven, then, in the best and briefest definition we can give, is the will of God in fulfilment, or the law of the whole in uncrossed action.

Hell is the experience produced by the rebound of violated law. Or, if we hold that, strictly speaking, a divine law is incapable of violation; as every

seeming resistance to gravitation is in fact a deeper obedience to gravitation, then we may say, in more accurate phrase, hell is the collision and friction of the limitations of different laws. It is the discord of the part with the whole. It is the antagonism of the soul with God. But the perpetual preservation of a perfectly balanced antagonism with God is inconceivable. If it grows worse, it will finally destroy itself, the aberrant individuality or malign insurgence vanishing in the totality of force, as the filth of our sewers vanishes purely in the purity of the ocean. If it grows better, its improvement will finally transform the opposition into reconciliation, the evil disappearing in good. Therefore, every being must at length be saved from misery, if not by redemptive atonement then by absolved annihilation, and one absolute heaven finally absorb the dwindling hells.

The question of chief importance to us in relation to heaven is how can we gain admission into it. The limitations of language necessitate the use of imagery for the expression of religious ideas: and there is no objection to it if it be recognised as imagery, and be interpreted accordingly. Considering, then, that beatific experience of which heaven consists, under the metaphor of a city, what are its ways of entrance? How can we pass to its citizenship?

The obstacles to our entrance exist not in the city itself. Its gates are never closed. The supreme conditions of redemption are spiritual, and not local or material. If there be within no fatal impediments to the free course of the will of God, all outer obstacles easily give way and cease. If we are ever to know heaven, it is within ourselves that we must find it out. Whatever abolishes that internal rebellion of the soul which makes its experience a purgatory, whatever replaces this confusion with an accord of the faculties, is a road to heaven. Whatever removes vices and inserts virtues in their stead, attuning us to the eternal laws of things, leads us through some gate into Paradise. No ceremonial artifice, no external transference, no sacramental exorcism, no priestly dodge can avoid this.

The same mistake generally committed in regard to the nature of heaven, making it a mere local residence, has been as generally committed in regard to the conditions of admission. They have been made arbitrary, whereas they are intrinsic. They are inwrought with the substantial laws of being. The idea of God being first fashioned after the image of a sultan in his palace amidst his courtiers, ruling an empire by his whims, it was but natural that heaven, and the terms of entrance there, should be in a similar manner conceived under the forms of court ceremonial with its capricious favouritisms. Thus it has been supposed that by the atoning sacrifice of an incarnate person of the Godhead satisfaction has been made for the sins of the world, which was hopelessly ruined by its original federal representative, and that thus a pardon was offered to those alone who mentally accept the formula of the correspondent belief.

According to this view, the only open gateway of heaven is faith in the vicarious atonement, a baptismal passage through the blood of Christ. Science

explodes this narrow and repulsive doctrine by demonstrating its irreconcilableness alike with physical fact and with moral law, first tracing the affiliated lines of our race back to many separate Adams in the shadows of an indeterminable antiquity, and then showing that the divine method of salvation is through substantial rejection of evil and appropriation of good in personal character, and not through royal proclamation and forensic conformity.

The plan of God for the salvation of men, as its culmination is seen in Christ, is the exhibition of the true type of being, the true style of motive and action, for their assimilation and reproduction: but Calvinism, when fundamentally analysed, reduces it to a monarchical manifesto and spectacular drama working its effects through verbal terms, acts of mental assent. Every sound teaching of philosophy refutes this exclusive and arbitrary creed. In fact, its fictitious and mythological nature is obvious the moment we see that the will of God is represented in those laws of nature which are the direct articulations and embodiments of his eternal mind and not in those political regulations or priestly and judicial formalities which express the perverted desires and artificial devices of men. The wearing of a certain dress, the bending of the knee, the muttering of a phrase, may flatter an earthly sovereign and gain a seat at his banquets. But it is childish folly to fancy any such thing of God. It is absurd to suppose that he has two schemes of government, one for the present state, another for the future; one for the elect, another for the reprobate; one for those who gaze on the spectacle of the crucifixion and make a certain sign, another for those who do not. His laws, identified with the unchangeable nature and course of the creation, sweep in one unbroken order throughout immensity and eternity, awarding perfect justice, and perfect mercy to all alike, making the experience of all souls a hell or a heaven to them accordingly as they strive against or harmonise with the divine system of existence in which they have their being. The mere acceptance of a technical dogma, the mere performance of a ritual action, cannot adjust a discordant character with the conditions of blessedness so as to reinstate an exile of heaven. To imagine that God will, in consideration of some technical device, place in heaven a man whose character fits him for hell, or, in default of that conventionality, place in hell a man whose character fits him for heaven, is to represent him as acting on an eccentric whim. And surely everyone who has a worthy idea of God must find it much easier to believe that men have mixed mythological dreams with their religion, than to believe that the infinite God is capable of despotic freaks or melodramatic caprices.

The poor, odious figment that baptism with the blood of Christ is the sole entrance to heaven is rebuked by the sweet and awful imperturbableness with which the laws of being act, distributing the ingredients of hell or heaven to everyone accordingly as his vices disobey or his virtues obey the will of God.

In a universe of law where God with all his attributes is omnipresent no

trick can ever be the pathway into Paradise. The true method of salvation is by the production of a good character through divine grace and the discipline of life. Thus, the real law of salvation through Christ consists not in the technical belief that he shed his blood for our redemption, but in the personal source of that spirit which will makes humanity willing to shed their own blood for the good of others.

There was, not long ago, called to her eternal home, a young woman, who, by the sweet gentleness, the heroic generosity and the unspotted fidelity of her whole life, deserves an exalted place on the roll of feminine chivalry and saintliness. Not a brighter name, or one associated with a more fearless and accomplished spirit, is recorded on the list of those Christian women who volunteered to serve as nurses in the great American war of nationality. No soldier was braver, few were more under fire, than she; still plying her holy work with unflinching love and fortitude, both in the horrid miasma of camps and before the charge of cavalry and the blaze of cannon. Many a time, the livelong night, under the solemn stars, equipped with assuaging stores, she threaded her way alone through the debris of carnage, seeking out the wounded among the dead, lifting her voice in song as a signal for any lingering survivor who might be near. Many a time she broke on the vision of mutilated and dying men, with the light of love in her eyes, a hymn of cheer on her lips, and unwearied ministrations in her hands, transfigured with courage and devotion, gleaming on their sight through the sulphurous flame of battle or the darkening mists of disease like an angel from heaven. Receiving the seeds of fatal illness from her exposures, she returned home to delight with her noble qualities all who knew her, to make a husband happy, and then to die a contented martyr. Meekly folding her hands, and saying: "Thanks, Father, for what thou hast enabled me to do, and still more for the new home to which thou art calling me now" she was gone. The cruel creed of superstition says: "Since she was a Universalist, having no part, by faith, in the mystic sacrifice of Christ, she is doomed to hell." But every attribute of God, every promise written by his own finger in the sacred instincts of our nature, as well as the cardinal teachings of the New Testament, assure us that as the victorious purity and devotedness of her soul bore her away from the tabernacle of flesh, the welcoming Savior said: "Come, thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world." And heaven swung wide its gate for her; and excited fancy conceives that, as she passed in, there was a gratulatory flutter of wings and waving of palms through the angelic ranks.

In distinction from that hypothetical gate of blood, set up by a crude theology in one narrow place alone, what, then, are the real gates of heaven, which stand open throughout the realms of responsible being? All the causes of which bring the will of man into consent with the will of God. Truth is the harmony of mind with the divine order; beauty, the harmony of taste with the divine symmetries; good, the harmony of volition with the divine ends.

Everything that secures these for us is an avenue into the peaceful city of bliss. To be in heaven is to be a transparent medium through which the qualities of objects, the reflections of phenomena, the vibrations of aboriginal power, pass in blessed freedom, without deflection or jar, and on which the mysterious attraction of the Infinite exerts its supreme spell. To be there in a superlative degree is to have a mind which is an infinitesimal mirror of the All, and a heart responsive to that mind, every perception of truth in the realm of the intellect generating a correspondent emotion of good in the realm of affection. Not any forensic act of faith in atoning blood, but ingrained piety a modest renunciation before the reality of things is the grand gateway of souls to the blessedness and repose of God.



Nizami, Manuscript of Nizami's *Khamsa* (Five Poems):
Ascent of the Prophet Mohammed, 1539-1543, Tabriz.
 Illustration. The British Library, London.



Lorenzo Ghiberti, *The Gates of Paradise*, 1435-1452.
Gilded bronze, 506 x 287 cm. Baptistery, Florence.

John Milton, **Paradise Lost**: Book XII, Lines 544-653

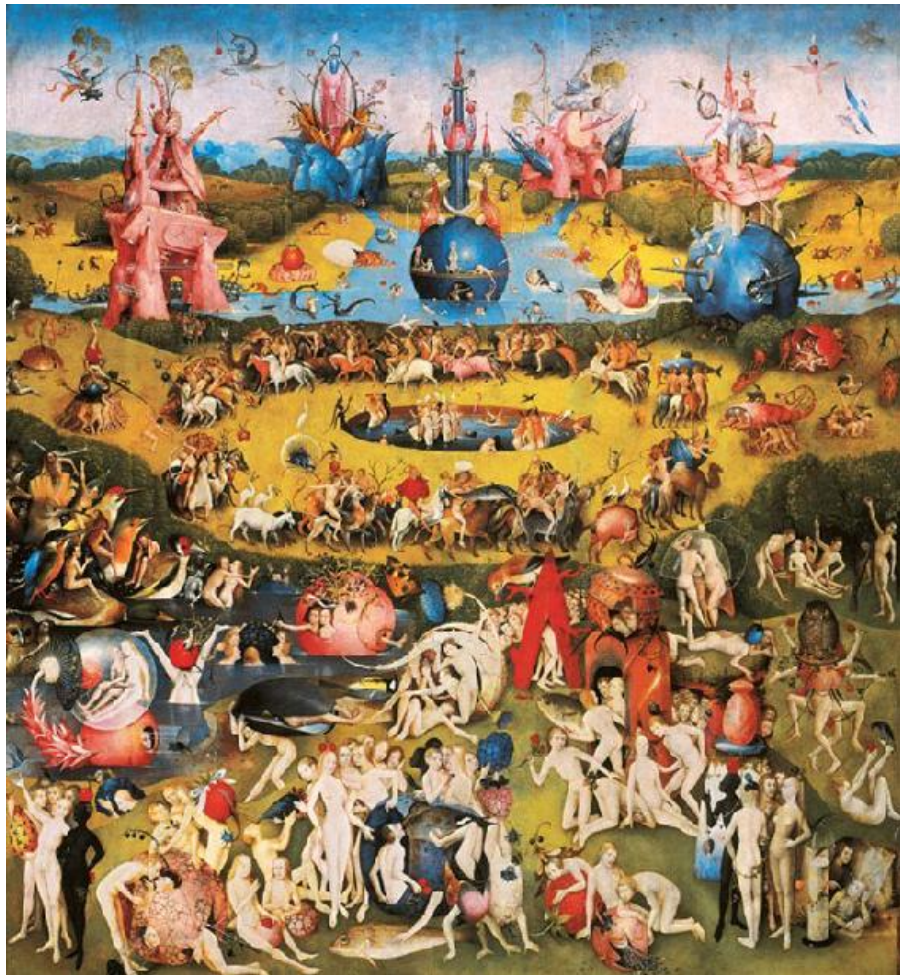
*“Now amplier known thy Saviour and thy Lord;
Last in the clouds from Heaven to be revealed
In glory of the Father, to dissolve
Satan with his perverted world; then raise
From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined,
New Heavens, new Earth, ages of endless date,
Founded in righteousness and peace and love,
To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss.”
He ended; and thus Adam last replied:*

*“How soon hath thy prediction, Seer blest,
Measured this transient world, the race of time,
Till time stand fixed! Beyond is all abyss,
Eternity, whose end no eye can reach.
Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,
Greatly in peace of thought, and have my fill
Of knowledge, what this vessel can contain;
Beyond which was my folly to aspire.
Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,
And love with fear the only God, to walk
As in his presence, ever to observe
His providence, and on him sole depend,
Merciful over all his works, with good
Still overcoming evil, and by small
Accomplishing great things, by things deemed weak
Subverting worldly-strong, and worldly-wise
By simply meek; that suffering for truth’s sake
Is fortitude to highest victory,
And, to the faithful, death the gate of life;
Taught this by his example whom I now
Acknowledge my Redeemer ever blest”
To whom thus also the Angel last replied:
“This having learned, thou hast attained the sum
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the stars
Thou knew’st by name, and all the ethereal powers,
All secrets of the deep, all Nature’s works,
Or works of God in Heaven, air, earth, or sea,
And all the riches of this world enjoy’dst,
And all the rule, one empire. Only add
Deeds to thy knowledge answerable; add faith,
Add virtue, patience, temperance; add love,
By name to come called charity, the soul
Of all the rest: then wilt them not be loath
To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
A Paradise within thee, happier far.
Let us descend now, therefore, from this top
Of speculation; for the hour precise
Exacts our parting hence; and, see the guards,
By me encamped on yonder hill, expect
Their motion, at whose front a flaming sword,
In signal of remove, waves fiercely round.
We may no longer stay: go, waken Eve;
Her also I with gentle dreams have calmed,
Portending good, and all her spirits composed
To meek submission: thou, at season fit,
Let her with thee partake what thou hast heard;
Chiefly what may concern her faith to know,
The great deliverance by her seed to come
(For by the Woman’s Seed) on all mankind;
That ye may live, which will be many days,
Both in one faith unanimous; though sad
With cause for evils past, yet much more cheered
With meditation on the happy end.”
He ended, and they both descend the hill.
Descended, Adam to the bower where Eve
Lay sleeping ran before, but found her waked;
And thus with words not sad she him received:
“Whence thou return’st, and whither went’st, I know;
For God is also in sleep, and dreams advise,*

*Which he hath sent propitious, some great good
Presaging, since with sorrow and heart's distress*



Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement* (detail), 1534-1541.
Fresco, 1.375 x 1.22 m. Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*
(centre panel), c. 1500-1505. Oil on wood,
whole triptych: 220 cm x 389 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (left panel), c. 1500-1505.
 Oil on wood, whole triptych: 220 cm x 389 cm.
 Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

*Wearied I fell asleep. But now lead on;
 In me is no delay; with thee to go
 Is to stay here; without thee here to stay,
 Is to go hence unwilling; thou to me
 Art all things under Heaven, all places thou,
 Who for my wilful crime art banished hence.
 This further consolation yet secure
 I carry hence: though all by me is lost,
 Such favour I unworthy am vouchsafed,*

*By me the Promised Seed shall all restore.”
So spake our mother Eve, and Adam heard
Well pleased, but answered not; for now too nigh
The Archangel stood, and from the other hill
To their fixed station, all in bright array,
The Cherubim descended; on the ground
Gliding meteorous, as evening mist
Risen from a river o’er the marish glides,
And gathers ground fast at the labourer’s heel
Homeward returning. High in front advanced,
The brandished sword of God before them blazed,
Fierce as a comet; which with torrid heat,
And vapour as the Libyan air adust,
Began to parch that temperate clime; whereat
In either hand the hastening angel caught
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast
To the subjected plain; then disappeared.
They, looking back, all the eastern side beheld
Of Paradise, so late their happy seat,
Waved over by that flaming brand; the gate
With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms.
Some natural tears they dropped, but wiped them soon;
The world was all before them, where to choose
Their place of rest, and Providence their guide.
They, hand in hand, with wandering steps and slow,
Through Eden took their solitary way.*



Sandro Botticelli, *Primavera*, c. 1482-1485.

Tempera on wood, 207 x 319 cm.

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



Sandro Botticelli, *Illustration from Dante's Divine Comedy: The Terrestrial Paradise - Dante (with Virgil and Statius) and Matilda at the River Lethe (Paradise, XXIII)*, c. 1480-1500. Copper engraving, 32 x 47 cm. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

DANTE'S PARADISE

CANTO XXIII

*E'en as the bird, who midst the leafy bower
Has, in her nest, sat darkling through the night,
With her sweet brood, impatient to descry
Their wished looks, and to bring home their food,
In the fond quest unconscious of her toil:
She, of the time prevenient, on the spray,
That overhangs their couch, with wakeful gaze
Expects the sun; nor ever, till the dawn,
Removeth from the east her eager ken;
So stood the dame erect, and bent her glance
Wistfully on that region, where the sun
Abateth most his speed; that, seeing her
Suspense and wand'ring, I became as one,
In whom desire is waken, and the hope
Of somewhat new to come fills with delight.
Short space ensued; I was not held, I say,
Long in expectance, when I saw the heav'n
Wax more and more resplendent; and, "Behold,"
Cried Beatrice, "the triumphal hosts
Of Christ, and all the harvest reap'd at length
Of thy ascending up these spheres." Meseem'd,
That, while she spake her image all did burn,
And in her eyes such fulness was of joy,*

And I am fain to pass unconstrued by.
 As in the calm full moon, when Trivia smiles,
 In peerless beauty, 'mid th' eternal nymphs,
 That paint through all its gulphs the blue profound;
 In bright pre-eminence so saw I there,
 O'er million lamps a sun, from whom all drew
 Their radiance, as from ours the starry train:
 And through the living light so lustrous glow'd
 The substance, that my ken endur'd it not.
 O Beatrice! sweet and precious guide!
 Who cheer'd me with her comfortable words!
 "Against the virtue, that o'erpow'reth thee,
 Avails not to resist. Here is the might,
 And here the wisdom, which did open lay
 The path, that had been yearned for so long,
 Betwixt the heav'n and earth." Like to the fire,
 That, in a cloud imprison'd doth break out
 Expansive, so that from its womb enlarg'd,
 It falleth against nature to the ground;
 Thus in that heav'nly banqueting my soul
 Outgrew herself; and, in the transport lost,
 Holds now remembrance none of what she was.
 "Ope thou thine eyes, and mark me: thou hast seen
 Things, that empower thee to sustain my smile."
 I was as one, when a forgotten dream
 Doth come across him, and he strives in vain
 To shape it in his fantasy again,
 "Whenas that gracious boon was proffer'd me,
 Which never may be cancel'd from the book,
 Wherein the past is written. Now were all
 Those tongues to sound, that have on sweetest milk
 Of Polyhymnia and her sisters fed
 And fatten'd, not with all their help to boot,
 Unto the thousandth parcel of the truth,
 My song might shadow forth that saintly smile,
 How merely in her saintly looks it wrought.
 And with such figuring of Paradise
 The sacred strain must leap, like one, that meets
 A sudden interruption to his road.
 But he, who thinks how ponderous the theme,
 And that 't is lain upon a mortal shoulder,
 May pardon, if it tremble with the burden.
 The track, our ventrous keel must furrow, brooks
 No unribb'd pinnacle, no self-sparing pilot.
 "Why doth my face," said Beatrice," thus
 Enamour thee, as that thou dost not turn
 Unto the beautiful garden, blossoming
 Beneath the rays of Christ? Here is the rose,
 Wherein the word divine was made incarnate;
 And here the lilies, by whose odour known
 The way of life was follow'd." Prompt I heard
 Her bidding, and encounter once again
 The strife of aching vision. As erewhile,
 Through glance of sunlight, stream'd through broken cloud.



William Blake, Illustration from *Dante's Divine Comedy*
(*Paradise XXVI*, 103-139), 1824-1827.

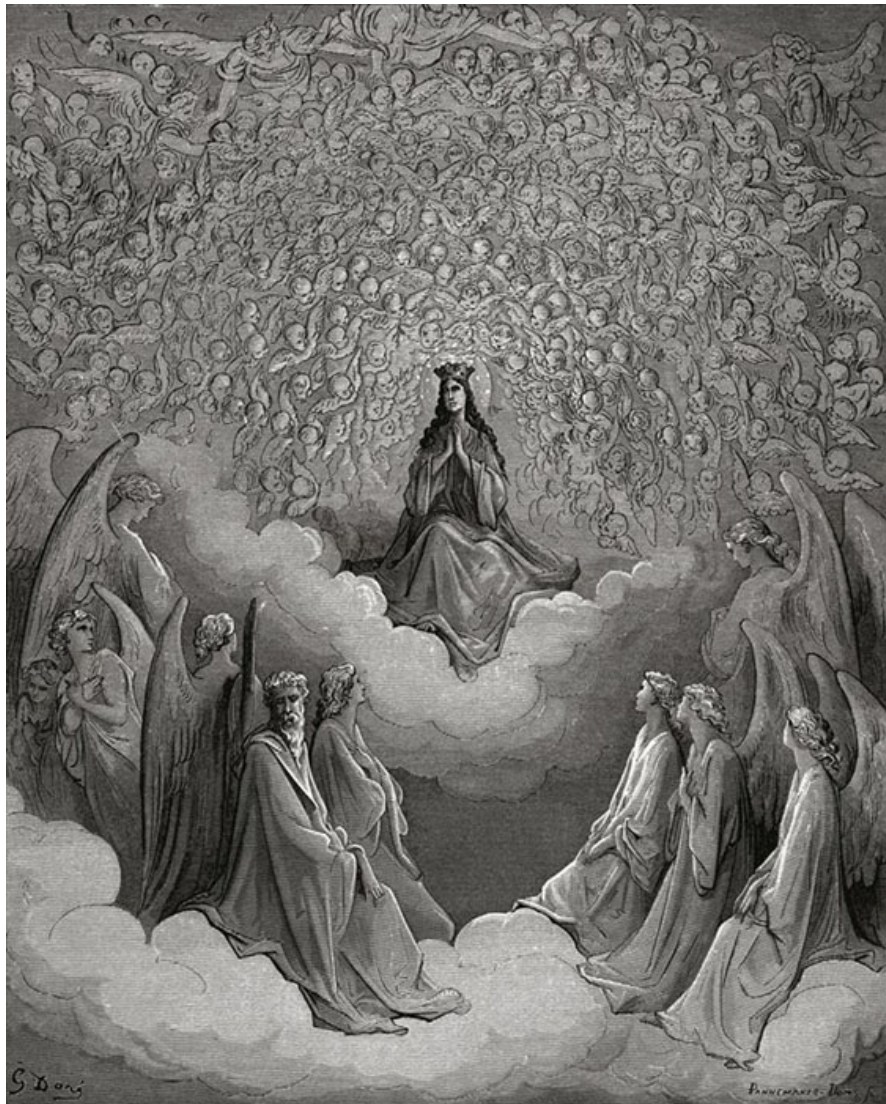
Pen and ink and watercolour over pencil, 37 x 52.5 cm.

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

*I ended, and therewith a song most sweet
Rang through the spheres; and "Holy, holy, holy,"
Accordant with the rest my lady sang.
And as a sleep is broken and dispersed
Through sharp encounter of the nimble light,
With the eye's spirit running forth to meet
The ray, from membrane on to the membrane urg'd;
And the upstartled wight loathes that he sees;
So, at his sudden waking, he misdeems
Of all around him, till assurance waits
On better judgment: thus the saintly dame
Drove from before mine eyes the motes away,
With the resplendence of her own, that cast
Their brightness downward, thousand miles below.
Whence I my vision, clearer than before,
Recover'd; and, well nigh astounded, ask'd
Of a fourth light, that now with us I saw.
And Beatrice: "The first living soul,
That ever the first virtue fram'd, admires
Within these rays his Maker." Like the leaf,
That bows its lithe top till the blast is blown;
By its own virtue rear'd then stands aloof;
So I, the whilst she said, awe-stricken bow'd.
Then eagerness to speak einbolden'd me;
And I began: "O fruit! that wast alone
Mature, when first engender'd! Ancient father!
That doubly seest in every wedded bride
Thy daughter by affinity and blood!
Devoutly as I may, I pray thee hold
Converse with me: my will thou seest; and I,*

More speedily to hear thee, tell it not."
 It chanceth oft some animal bewrays,
 Through the sleek cov'ring of his furry coat.
 The fondness, that stirs in him and conforms
 His outside seeming to the cheer within:
 And in like guise was Adam's spirit mov'd
 To joyous mood, that through the covering shone,
 Transparent, when to pleasure me it spake:
 "No need thy will be told, which I untold
 Better discern, than thou whatever thing
Thou holdst most certain: for that will I see
 In Him, who is truth's mirror, and Himself
 Parhelion unto all things, and naught else
 To Him. This wouldst thou hear; how long since God
 Plac'd me high garden, from whose bounds
 She led me up in this ladder, steep and long;
 What space endur'd my season of delight;
 Whence truly sprang the wrath that banish'd me;
 And what the language, which I spake and fram'd
 Not that I tasted of the tree, my son,
 Was in itself the cause of that exile,
 But only my transgressing of the mark
 Assign'd me. There, whence at thy lady's hest
 The Mantuan mov'd him, still was debarr'd
 This council, till the sun had made complete,
 Four thousand and three hundred rounds and twice,
 His annual journey; and, through every light
 In his broad pathway, saw I him return,
 Thousand save sev'nty times, the whilst I dwelt
 Upon the earth. The language I did use
 Was worn away, or ever Nimrod's race
 Their unaccomplishable work began.
 For naught, that man inclines to, ere was lasting,
 Left by his reason free, and variable,
 As is the sky that sways him. That he speaks,
 Is nature's prompting: whether thus or thus,
 She leaves to you, as ye do most affect it.
 Ere I descended into hell's abyss,
 El was the name on earth of the Chief Good,
 Whose joy enfolds me: Eli then 't was eall'd
 And so beseemed: for, in mortals, use
 Is as the leaf upon the bough; that goes
 And other comes instead. Upon the mount
 Most high above the waters, all my life,
 Both innocent and guilty, did but reach
 From the first hour, to that which cometh next
 (As the sun changes quarter), to the sixth.

— Dante's Paradise, Canto XXVI lines 65-141



Gustave Doré, Illustration from
 Dante's *Divine Comedy: The Queen of Heaven*
 (*Paradise*, XXXI, 116, 117). Engraving.

"O Lady! thou in whom my hopes have rest!
 Who, for my safety, hast not scorn'd, in hell
 To leave the traces of thy footsteps mark'd!
 For all mine eyes have seen, I, to thy power
 And goodness, virtue owe and grace. Of slave,
 Thou hast to freedom brought me; and no means,
 For my deliverance apt, hast left untried.
 Thy liberal bounty still toward me keep.
 That, when my spirit, which thou madest whole,
 Is loosen'd from this body, it may find

Favour with thee." So I my suit preferr'd:
 And she, so distant, as appear'd, look'd down,
 And smil'd; then tow'rd's th' eternal fountain turn'd.
 And thus the senior, holy and rever'd:
 "That thou at length mayst happily conclude
 Thy voyage (to which end I was despatch'd,
 By supplication mov'd and holy love)
 Let thy upsoaring vision range, at large,
 This garden through: for so, by ray divine
 Kindled, thy ken a higher flight shall mount;
 And from heav'n's queen, whom fervent I adore,
 All gracious aid befriend us; for that I
 Am her own faithful Bernard." Like a wight,
 Who haply from Croatia wends to see
 Our Veronica, and the while 't is shown,
 Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,
 And, all that he hath heard revolving, saith
 Unto himself in thought: "And didst thou look
 E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and God?
 And was this semblance thine?" So gaz'd I then
 Adoring; for the charity of him,
 Who musing, in the world that peace enjoy'd,
 Stood lively before me. "Child of grace!"
 Thus he began: "thou shalt not knowledge gain
 Of this glad being, if thine eyes are held
 Still in this depth below. But search around
 The circles, to the furthest, till thou spy
 Seated in state, the queen, that of this realm
 Is sovran." Straight mine eyes I rais'd; and bright,
 As, at the birth of morn, the eastern clime
 Above th' horizon, where the sun declines;
 So to mine eyes, that upward, as from vale
 To mountain sped, at th' extreme bound, a part
 Excell'd in lustre all the front oppos'd.
 And as the glow bums ruddiest o'er the wave,
 That waits the sloping beam, which Phaëton
 Ill knew to guide, and on each part the light
 Diminish'd fades, intensest in the midst;
 So burn'd the peaceful oriflamb, and slack'd
 On every side the living flame decay'd.
 And in that midst their sportive pennons wav'd
 Thousands of angels; in resplendence each
 Distinct, and quaint adornment. At their glee
 And carol, smil'd the Lovely One of heav'n,
 That joy was in the eyes of all the blest.
 Had I a tongue in eloquence as rich,
 As is the colouring in fancy's loom,
 'T were all too poor to utter the least part
 Of that enchantment. When he saw mine eyes
 Intent on her, that charm'd him, Bernard gaz'd
 With so exceeding fondness, as infus'd
 Ardour into my breast, unfelt before.



Kashi-tiles combined with a strong relief of the colours ultramarine, turquoise and white that symbolise the notion of Paradise (detail), 1386. Ceramic.
Emir Zade Mausoleum, Shah-i-Zinda, Samarkand.

VII

*From the garden of Heaven a western breeze
Blows through the leaves of my garden of earth;
With a love like a huri I'd take mine ease,
And wine! bring me wine, the giver of mirth!
To-day the beggar may boast him a king,
His banqueting-hall is the ripening field,*

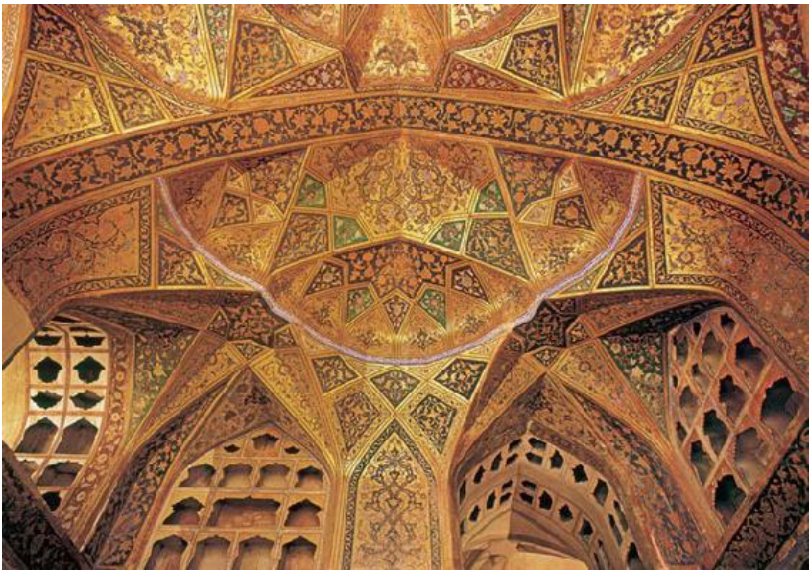
And his tent the shadow that soft clouds fling.

*A tale of April the meadows unfold
Ah, foolish for future credit to slave,
And to leave the cash of the present untold!
Build a fort with wine where thy heart may brave
The assault of the world ; when thy fortress falls,
The relentless victor shall knead from thy dust
The bricks that repair its crumbling walls.*

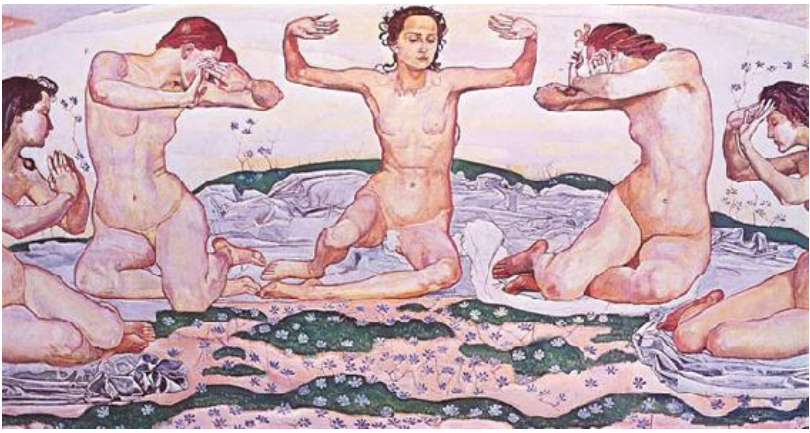
*Trust not the word of that foe in the fight!
Shall the lamp of the synagogue lend its flame
To set thy monastic torches alight?
Drunken am I, yet place not my name
In the Book of Doom, nor pass judgment on it;
Who knows what the secret finger of Fate
Upon his own white forehead has writ!*

*And when the spirit of Hafiz has fled,
Follow his bier with a tribute of sighs;
Though the ocean of sin has closed o'er his head,
He may find a place in God's Paradise.*

Poem from the Divan of Hafiz
translated by Gertrude Lowthian Bell



Shah Suleyman, *Hasht Behesht: The Palace of the Eighth Paradise*
(detail of the ceiling), 1660. Painted ceiling. Isfahan.

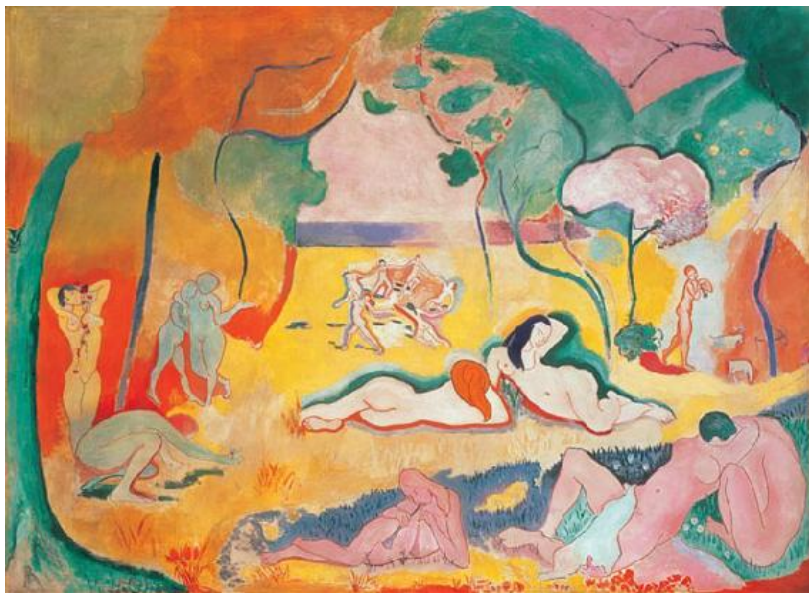


Ferdinand Hodler, *The Day I*, 1899.
Oil on canvas, 160 x 340 cm. Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern.

The Spiritual Dawn

*When the morning white and rosy breaks,
 With the gnawing Ideal, upon the debauchee,
 By the power of a strange decree,
 Within the sotted beast an Angel wakes.
 The mental Heaven's inaccessible blue,
 For wearied mortals that still dream and mourn,
 Expands and sinks; towards the chasm drawn.
 Thus, cherished goddess, Being pure and true
 Upon the rests of foolish orgy-nights
 Thine image, more sublime, more pink, more clear,
 Before my staring eyes is ever there.
 The sun has darkened all the candle lights;
 And thus thy spectre like the immortal sun,
 Is ever victorious - thou resplendent one!*

By Charles Baudelaire, from the collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). Trans. by Cyril Scott



Henri Matisse, *The Joy of Life (La Joie de vivre)*,
1905-1906. Oil on canvas, 175 x 241 cm.
The Barnes Foundation, Merion.

Invitation to a Journey

*My sister, my dear
 Consider how fair,
 Together to live it would be!
 Down yonder to fly
 To love, till we die,
 In the land which resembles thee.
 Those suns that rise
 'Neath erratic skies,
 No charm could be like unto theirs
 So strange and divine,
 Like those eyes of thine
 Which glow in the midst of their tears.
 There, all is order and loveliness,
 Luxury, calm and voluptuousness.
 The tables and chairs,
 Polished bright by the years,
 Would decorate sweetly our rooms,
 And the rarest of flowers
 Would twine round our bowers
 And mingle their amber perfumes
 The ceilings arrayed,
 And the mirrors inlaid,*

*This Eastern splendour among,
 Would furtively steal
 O'er our souls, and appeal
 With its tranquillous native tongue.
 There, all is order and loveliness,*

*Luxury, calm and voluptuousness.
In the harbours, peep,
At the vessels asleep
(Their humour is always to roam),
Yet it is but to grant
Thy smallest want
From the ends of the earth that they come,
The sunsets beam
Upon meadow and stream,
And upon the city entire
'Neath a violet crest,
The world sinks to rest,
Illumed by a golden fire.
There, all is order and loveliness,
Luxury, calm and voluptuousness.*

By Charles Baudelaire, from the collection *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Flowers of Evil). Trans. by Cyril Scott



Buddha Gautama at Sankasya, descending from heaven down the third staircase accompanied by Brahma and Indra, after urging his mother to adopt the Buddhist faith, 18th century. Bangkok National Museum, Bangkok.

Reincarnation and Enlightenment

In the Hindu views of the fate of the human soul, metaphysical subtlety and imaginative vastness, intellect and fancy, unquestioning tradition and audacious speculation, besotted ritualism and heaven-storming spirituality, are combined together on a scale of grandeur that is rarely seen elsewhere in the literature or faith of the world. Hinduism, with its 100,000,000 adherents holding sway over India, and Buddhism, with its 400,000,000 disciples scattered over a dozen nations, from Java to Japan, practically considered, in reference to their actually received dogmas and aims pertaining to a future life, agree sufficiently to warrant us in giving them a general examination together.

The most ancient Hindu doctrine of the future fate of man, as given in the Vedas, was simple and very different from the forms in which it has since prevailed. When a man dies, the earth is invoked to wrap his body up, as a mother wraps her child in her garment, and to lie lightly on him. He himself is addressed thus: “Go forth, go forth on the ancient paths which our fathers in old times have trodden: the two rulers in bliss, Yama and Varuna, shalt thou

behold." Varuna judges all. He thrusts the wicked down into darkness; and thus they are doomed. They were supposed either to be annihilated, or to live as demons, in sin, blackness, and woe. The good ascend to heaven and are glorified with a shining spiritual body like that of the gods. Yama, the first man, originator of the human race on earth, is the beginner and head of renewed humanity in another world, and is termed the 'Assembler of Men'. It is a poetic and grand conception that the first one who died, leading the way, should be the patriarch and monarch of all who follow. The old Vedic hymns imply that the departed good are in a state of exalted happiness, but scarcely define the details of this paradise. The following passage, versified with strict fidelity to the original, is as full and explicit as any:

*Where glory never fading is, where is the world of heavenly light,
The world of immortality, the everlasting, set me there!
Where Yama reigns, Vivasvat's son, in the inmost sphere of heaven bright.
Where those abounding waters flow, oh, make me but immortal there!
Where there is freedom unrestrain'd, where the triple vault of heaven's in sight,
Where worlds of brightest glory are, oh, make me but immortal there!
Where pleasures and enjoyments are, where bliss and raptures ne'er take flight,
Where all desires are satisfied, oh, make me but immortal there!*

But this form of doctrine long ago passed from the Hindu remembrance, lost in the multiplying developments and specifications of a mystical philosophy, and a teeming superstition nourished by an unbounded imagination.

Both Brahmans and Buddhists conceive of creation on the most enormous scale. Mount Meru rises from the centre of the earth to the height of about two million miles. On its summit is the city of Brahma, covering a space of 14,000 leagues, and surrounded by the stately cities of the regents of the spheres. Between Meru and the wall of stone forming the extreme circumference of the earth are seven concentric circles of rocks. Between these rocky bracelets are continents and seas. The celestial spaces are occupied by a large number of heavens, called 'deva lokas,' increasing in the glory and bliss of their prerogatives. The worlds below the earth are hells, called 'naraka.' The description of twenty-eight of these, given in the Vishnu Purana, makes the reader well aware of the horrors of hell. The Buddhist *Books of Ceylon* tell of twenty-six heavens placed in regular order above one another in the sky, crowded with all imaginable delights. They also depict, in the abyss underneath the earth, eight great hells, each containing sixteen smaller ones, the whole 136 composing one gigantic hell. The eight chief hells are situated over one another, each partially enclosing and overlapping the next; and the sufferings inflicted on their unfortunate occupants are of the most terrific character. However these hints at the local apparatus of reward and punishment do not illustrate the scope of their mythological scheme of the universe.

The five hundred million Hindu and Buddhist believers hold that all the

gods, men, demons, and various grades of animal life occupying the immeasurable array of worlds compose one cosmic family. The totality of animated beings, from a detestable gnat to thundering Indra, from the miniscule worm to the supreme Buddha, constitute one fraternal unit, by the unavoidable effects of the law of retribution constantly interchanging their residences in a succession of rising and sinking existences, ranging through all the earths, heavens, and hells of the universe, bound by the terrible links of merit and demerit in the phantasmagorical dungeon of births and deaths. The Vishnu Purana declares, "The universe, this whole egg of Brahma, is everywhere swarming with living creatures, all of whom are captives in the chains of acts."

The one prime postulate of the Asian faiths, never to be questioned any more than the central and stationary position of the Earth, is that all beings below the Infinite One are confined in the circle of existence, the whirl of births and deaths, by the consequences of their virtues and vices. When a man dies, if he has an excess of good virtues, he is born, as a superior being, in one of the heavens. According to the nature and degree of his merit, his heavenly existence is prolonged, or perhaps repeated many times in succession; or, if his next birth occurs on earth, it is under happy circumstances, as a sage or a king. But when he expires, should there, on the other hand, be an excess of immoral deeds, he is born as a demon in one of the hells, or may in repeated lives run the circuit of the hells; or, if he at once returns to the earth, it is as a beggar, an outcast, or in the form of a rat, snake, or louse.

A specific evil is never cancelled by being counterbalanced by a greater good. The fruit of that evil must be experienced, and also of that greater good, by appropriate births in the hells and heavens, or in the higher and lower grades of earthly existence. The two courses of action must be run through independently. Merit or demerit can be balanced or neutralised only by the full fruition of its own natural and necessary consequences. The law of merit and of demerit is fate. It works irresistibly, through all changes and recurrences, from the beginning to the end. The cessation of virtue or of vice does not put an end to its effects until its full force is exhausted. A man faultlessly and scrupulously good through his present life may be guilty of some foul crime committed a hundred lives before and not yet expiated. Accordingly, he may now suffer for it, or his next birth may take place in a hell. On the contrary, he may be credited with some great merit acquired thousands of generations ago, whose fruit he has not eaten, and which may bring him good fortune in spite of present sins, or on the rolling and many coloured wheel of metempsychosis may secure for him next a celestial birthplace. In short periods, it will be seen, there is moral confusion, but, in the long run, exact compensation.

The Hindu imagination is strikingly manifest in its descriptions of the rewards of virtue in the heavens and of the punishments of sin in the hells. Visions pass before us of beautiful groves full of fragrance and music,

abounding in delicious fruits, and birds of gorgeous plumage, crystal streams embedded with pearls, unruffled lakes where the lotus blooms, palaces of gems, crowds of friends and lovers, endless revelations of truth, boundless graspings of power, all that can stir and enchant intellect, will, fancy, and heart. In some of the heavens the residents have no bodily form, but enjoy purely spiritual pleasures. In others they are self-resplendent, and traverse the ether. They are many miles in height, one being described whose crown was four miles high and who wore on his person sixty wagonloads of jewels. The ordinary lifetime of the inhabitants of the deva loka named Wasawartti equals 9,216,000,000 of our years. They breathe only once in sixteen hours.

The reverse of this picture is still more vigorously drawn, highly coloured, and diversified in contents. The walls of the Hindu hell are over a hundred miles thick; and so dazzling is their brightness that it bursts the eyes which look at them anywhere within a distance of four hundred leagues. The poor creatures here, wrapped in shrouds of fire, writhe and yell in frenzy of pain. Terror and anguish fill the whole region. A glutton is punished thus: experiencing an insatiable hunger in a body as large as three mountains, he is tantalised with a mouth no larger than the eye of a needle. The infernal tormentors, throwing their victims down, take a flexible flame in each hand, and with these lash them alternately right and left. One demon, Rahu, is 76,800 miles tall: the palm of his hand measures 50,000 acres; and when he is enraged he rushes up to the sky and swallows the sun or the moon, thus causing an eclipse.

With the turmoil and pain of entanglement in the vortex of births, and all the repulsive exposures of finite life, the Hindus contrast the idea of an infinite rest and bliss, an endless exemption from evil and struggle, an immense receptivity of reposing power and quiet contemplation. In consequence of their endlessly varied, intensely earnest speculations and musings over this contrast of finite restlessness and pain with infinite peace and blessedness, a contrast which constitutes the preaching of their priests, saturates their sacred books, fills their thoughts, and broods over all their life, Hindus and Buddhists are pervaded with a profound horror of individual existence, and with a profound desire for absorption into the Infinite Being.

The literary products of the Eastern mind wonderfully abound with painful descriptions of the compromises and afflictions inseparably connected with existence. Volumes would be required to furnish an adequate representation of the vivid and inexhaustible amplification with which they set forth the disgusts and terrors associated with the series of ideas expressed by the words conception, birth, life, death, hell, and regeneration.



Buddha Manifestation on the Pure Land of Tushita,
19th century, Tibet. Pigment on fabric, 77.5 x 53.3 cm.
Rubin Museum of Art, New York.



Padmasambhava and his Eight Manifestations, 19th century.
Pigment and mineral colours on cotton, 148 x 97.5 cm.
Phajoding Gonpa, Thimphu, Bhutan.



The Jataka Tales, 18th-19th century.
Bhutanese painted thangka, 174 x 95 cm.
Phajoding Gonpa, Thimphu.



Shadow of the Buddha. Black painting
with gold leaf, Wat Chakrawat, Bangkok.

The result of these views is the awakening of an unquenchable desire to “break from the fetters of existence,” and to be “delivered from the whirlpool of transmigration.” Both Hinduism and Buddhism are in essence methods of securing release from the chain of incarnated lives, and attaining identification with the Infinite.

What is the Hindu method of salvation, or secret of emancipation? Rightly apprehended in the depth and purity of the real doctrine, it is this. There is in reality but one soul: everything else is error, illusion, and misery. Whoever

acquires the knowledge of this truth by personal perception is thereby liberated. The logic runs thus. There is only One Soul, the absolute God. All beside is empty deception. That One Soul consists of true knowledge. Whoever attains to true knowledge, therefore, is absolute God, forever freed from the sphere of semblances.

All the Hindu sects unite in thinking that liberation from the net of births is to be obtained and the goal of their wishes to be reached by one means only; and that is knowledge, real wisdom, an adequate sight of the truth. Without this knowledge there is no possible emancipation; but there are three ways of seeking the needed knowledge.

Some strive, by direct intellectual abstraction and effort, by metaphysical speculation, to grasp the true principles of being. Others try, by voluntary penance, self-abnegation, and pain, to accumulate such a degree of merit, or to bring the soul into such a state of preparedness, as will compel the truth to reveal itself. And still others devote themselves to the worship of some chosen deity, by ritual acts and fervid contemplation, to obtain by his favour the needed wisdom.

The Hindu religion is a philosophy; and it keeps an incomparably strong hold on the minds of its devotees. Its most vital and comprehensive principle is expressed in the following sentence: "The soul itself is not susceptible of pain, or decay, or death; the site of these things is nature; but nature is unconscious; the consciousness that pain exists is restricted to the soul, although the soul is not the actual seat of pain." This is the reason why every Hindu yearns so deeply to be freed from the meshes of nature, why he so anxiously follows the light of faith and penance, or the clew of speculation, through all mazes of mystery. It is that he may at last gaze on the central Truth, and through that sight seize the fruition of the supreme and eternal good of man in the unity of his selfhood with the Infinite, and so be born no more and experience no more trouble.

We turn now to the Buddhist doctrine of a future life as distinguished from Hinduism. The "Four Noble Truths" of Buddhism, as they are called, are these: first, that there is sorrow; secondly, that every living person necessarily feels it; thirdly, that it is desirable to be freed from it; fourthly, that the only deliverance from it is by that pure knowledge which destroys all cleaving to existence. A Buddha is a being who, in consequence of having reached the Buddhahood, which implies the possession of infinite goodness, infinite power, and infinite wisdom, is able to teach men that true knowledge which secures emancipation.

The Buddhahood is open to everyone, though few ever acquire it. Most wonderful and tremendous is the process of its attainment. Upon a time, some being, perhaps then incarnate as a mosquito alighting on a muddy leaf in some swamp, pauses for a while to muse. Looking up through infinite stellar systems, with hungry love and boundless ambition, to the throne and scepter of absolute immensity, he vows within himself, "I will become a Buddha."

The total influences of his past, the forces of destiny, conspiring with his purpose, omnipotence is in that resolution. Nothing shall ever turn him aside from it. He might soon acquire for himself deliverance from the dreadful vortex of births; but, determined to achieve the power of delivering others from their miseries as sentient beings, he voluntarily throws himself into the stream of successive existences, and with divine patience and fortitude undergoes everything.

From that moment, no matter in what form he is successively born, whether as a bug, a white elephant, a monarch, or a god, he is a Bodhisattva, that is, a candidate bound for Buddhahood. He at once begins practising the ten primary virtues necessary for attainment. The period required for the full exercise of one of these virtues is a bhumi. Its duration is thus illustrated. Were a Bodhisattva once in a thousand births to shed a single drop of blood, he would in the space of a bhumi shed more blood than there is water in a thousand oceans. On account of his merit, he might always be born amidst the pleasures of the heavens; but since he could there make no progress towards his goal, he prefers being born in the world of men. During his gradual advance, there is no good he does not perform, no hardship he does not undertake, no evil he does not willingly suffer; and all for the benefit of others, to obtain the means of emancipating those whom he sees fastened by ignorance in the afflictive circle of acts. Wherever born, acting, or suffering, his eye is still turned towards that empty throne, at the apex of the universe, from which the last Buddha has vaulted into Nirvana. The Buddhists have many scriptures, especially one, called the *Book of the Five Hundred and Fifty Births*, detailing the marvellous adventures of the Bodhisattva during his numerous transmigrations, wherein he exhibits for each species of being to which he belongs a model character and life.

At length the momentous day dawns when the untiring Bodhisattva enters on his well-earned Buddhahood. From that time, during the rest of his life, he goes about preaching discourses, teaching every prepared creature he meets the method of securing eternal deliverance. Leaving behind in these discourses a body of wisdom sufficient to guide to salvation all who will give attentive ear and heart, the Buddha then, his sublime work of disinterested love being completed, receives the fruition of his toil, the vital prize of the universe, the Infinite Good. Thus after his death, he enters Nirvana. There is no more evil of any sort for him at all forever. The final fading echo of sorrow has ceased in the silence of perfect blessedness; the last undulation of the wave of change has rolled upon the shore of immutability.



Descent from Trayastrimsha Heaven,
Thailand, 19th century. Fabric painting,
243 x 99 cm. The British Museum, London.

The only historic Buddha is Shakyamuni, or Gautama, who was born at Kapilavastu around the 6th century BCE. His teachings contain many principles in common with those of the Brahmins. But he revolted against their insufferable conceit and cruelty. He protested against their claim that no-one could obtain emancipation until after being born as a Brahmin and passing through the various rites and degrees of their order. In the face of the most powerful and arrogant priesthood in the world, he preached the perfect equality of all mankind, and the consequent abolition of castes. Whoever

acquires a total detachment of affection from all existence is thereby released from birth and misery; and the means of acquiring that detachment are freely offered to all in his doctrine.

Thus did Gautama preach. He took the monopoly of religion out of the hands of a caste, and proclaimed emancipation to every creature that breathes. He established his system in the valley of the Ganges near the middle of the 6th century BCE. It soon overran the whole country, and held sway until about 800 CE, when an awful persecution and slaughter on the part of the uprising Brahmins drove it out of the land with sword and fire. "The colossal figure which for fourteen centuries had bestridden the Indian continent vanished suddenly, like a rainbow at sunset."

Gautama's philosophy, in its ontological profundity, is of a subtlety and vastness that would rack the brain of Johann Gottlieb Fichte or a Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling; but, popularly stated, so far as our present purpose demands, it is this. Existence is the one all-inclusive evil; cessation of existence, or Nirvana, is the infinite good. The cause of existence is ignorance, which leads one to attach to material objects. To escape from the chain of existence, he must destroy the cause of his or her confinement in it, that is, evil desire, or the devotion to existing objects. The method of salvation in Gautama's system is to vanquish and annihilate all desire for existing things. How must this be accomplished? By acquiring an intense perception of both the miseries of existence and the intense perception of the contrasted yearning of the state of emancipation, (commonly referred to as Nirvana). Accordingly, the discourses of Gautama, and the sacred books of the Buddhists, are filled with vivid accounts of everything disgusting and horrible connected with existence, and with vivid descriptions, consciously faltering with inadequacy, of everything supremely fascinating in connection with Nirvana. "The three reflections on the impermanency, suffering, and unreality of the body are three gates leading to the city of Nirvana." The constant claim is, that whosoever by adequate moral discipline and philosophical contemplation attains to a certain degree of wisdom, a certain degree of intellectual insight, instead of any longer cleaving to existence, will shudder at the thought of it, and, instead of shrinking from death, will be ravished with unfathomable ecstasy by the prospect of Nirvana. Then, when he dies, he is free from all liability to a return.



The Descent of Buddha Amida and the Guardians,
14th century. Colour on silk, 83.2 x 38.8 cm.
Idemitsu Museum of Art, Tokyo. Nanbokucho Period.

The Buddhist authors do not always adhere to this statement. We sometimes read of men's entering the paths to Nirvana in some of the heavens, likewise of their entering the final fruition through the decease in a deva loka. Still, it is the common view that emancipation from all existence can be secured only by a human being on earth. The last birth must be in that form. The emblem of Buddha, engraved on most of his monuments, is a wheel, denoting that he has passed through the circle of existences. Henceforth he is named Tathagata, meaning "he who has gone."

The word Nirvana may be defined differently according to the particular school. A small party, represented perhaps by able writers may believe in annihilation in one sense of the term, just as has happened in Christendom, while the common doctrine of the people denounce this idea. With the horror of individuated existence, and a highly poetical style of writing, nothing could be more natural, in depicting their ideas of the most desirable state of being, than that they should carry their metaphors expressive of repose, freedom from action and emotion, to a pitch conveying to our cold and literal thought the conceptions of blank unconsciousness and absolute nothingness.

No definition of Nirvana is more frequent than the one given by the Kalpa Sutra, namely, "cessation from action and freedom from desire." But this, like many of the other representations, such, for instance, as the exclusion of succession, very plainly is not a denial of all being, but only of our present modes of experience. The dying Gautama is said to "have passed through the several states, one after another, until he arrived at the state where there was no pain. He then continued to enter the other higher states, and the elevated being Nirvana." Can literal annihilation, the naked emptiness of nonentity, be better than the highest state of being? It can be so only when we view Nothing on the positive side as identical with All, make annihilating deprivation equivalent to universal bestowment, regard negation as affirmation, and, in the last synthesis of contradictions, see the abysmal Vacuum as a Plenum of fruition.



Seated Buddha, end of the 5th century. Carved into the side of a cliff in the Wuzhou hill. Yungang Caves, Shanxi, Datong.

There is a scheme of doctrine held by some Buddhist philosophers which may be thus stated. There are five constituent elements of sentient existence. They are called khandas, and are as follows: the organised body, sensation, perception, discrimination, and consciousness. Death is the dissolution and entire destruction of these khandas, and apart from them there is no synthetic unit, soul, or personality. Yet in a certain sense death is not the absolute annihilation of a human existence, because it leaves a potentiality inherent in that existence. There is no identical ego to survive and be born again; but karma, the sum of a man's action, produces at his death a new being, and so on in continued series until Nirvana is attained. Thus the succession of being is kept up with transmitted responsibility, as a flame is transferred from one wick to another. It is evident enough that the limitation of existence to the five khandas, excluding the idea of any independent individuality, makes death annihilation, and renders the very conception of a future life for those now living an absurdity. But we are convinced that this view is the speculative peculiarity of a sect, and by no means the common belief of the Buddhist populace or the teaching of Gautama himself. This is a result of the fact that Gautama is represented as having lived through millions of existences, in different states and worlds, with preserved identity and memory. The history of his concatenated advance towards the Buddhahood is the supporting basis and the saturating spirit of documentary Buddhism. And the same idea pervades the whole range of narratives relating to the repeated births and deaths of the innumerable Buddhist heroes and saints who, after so many residences on earth, in the hells, in the deva lokas, have at last reached

emancipation. They recollect their adventures; they recount copious portions of their experience stretching through many lives.

The etymological force of the word Nirvana is extinction, as when the sun has set, a fire has burned out, or a lamp is extinguished. The fair laws of interpretation do not compel us, in cases like this, to receive the severest literal significance of a word as conveying the meaning which a popular doctrine holds in the minds of its believers. There is almost always looseness, vagueness, metaphor, accommodation. But take the term before us in its strictest sense, and mark the result. When a fire is extinguished, it is obvious that, while the flame has disappeared, the substance of the flame, whatever it was, has not ceased to be, has not been actually annihilated. It has only ceased to be in a certain visible form in which it existed before; but it still survives under altered conditions. Now, to compare the putting out of a lamp to the death of a man, extinction is not actual destruction, but a transition of the flame into another state of being. That other state, in the case of the soul, is Nirvana.

There is a final consideration, possibly of some worth in dealing with this obscure theme. We will approach it through a preliminary query and quotation. That nothing can extend beyond its limits is an identical proposition. How vast, then, must be the soul of man in form or in power!

The Buddhist ideal is not self-annihilation, but self-universalisation. It is not the absorption of a drop into the sea, but the dilatation of a drop to the sea. Each drop swells to the whole ocean, each soul becomes the Boundless One, each arhat is identified with the total Nirvana. The rivers of emancipated men neither disembody into the ocean of spirit nor evaporate into the abyss of nonentity, but are blended with infinitude as an ontological integer. Nirvana is unexposed and illimitable space. Buddhism is perfect disinterestedness, absolute self-surrender. It is the gospel of everlasting emancipation for all. It cannot be that a deliberate suicide of soul is the ideal holding the deepest desire of four hundred million people. Nirvana is not negation, but a pure positive without alternation or foil.

It should be noticed, before we close this chapter, that some of the Hindus give a spiritual interpretation to all the gross physical details of their so highly collared and extravagant mythology. One of their sacred books says, "Pleasure and pain are states of the mind. Heaven is that which delights the mind, hell is that which gives it pain. Hence vice is called hell, and virtue is called heaven." Another author says, "The fire of the angry mind produces the fire of hell, and consumes its possessor. A wicked person causes his evil deeds to impinge upon himself, and that is hell."

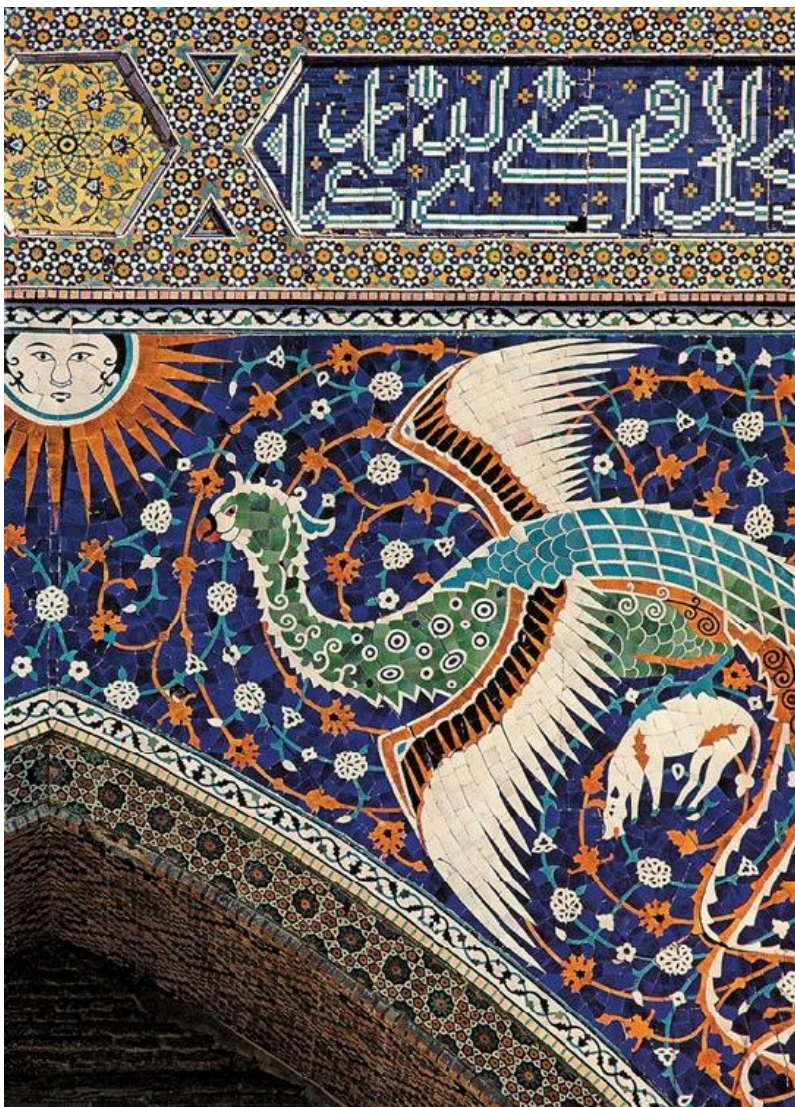
In conclusion, Hindu or Buddhist subscribe to the belief of death as a form of liberation. Through the gates of death, the soul cleanses itself from evil and is re-born. All sense, passion, care, and grief shall cease with deliverance from the spectral semblances of this material life. All pure contemplation, perfect repose, immaculate and pure joy shall begin with entrance upon the true life

beyond. Thus thinking, he feels that death is the avenue to infinite expansion, freedom, peace, bliss; and he longs for it with an intensity not dreamed of by more frigid natures. "Think not what thou art, Believer; think but what thou mayst become, For the World is thy deceiver, and the Light thy only home."

The Western mind approaches the subject of death negatively, stripping off the attributes of finite being; the Eastern mind, positively, putting on the attributes of infinite being. Negative acts, denying function, are antipathetic, and lower the sense of life; positive acts, affirming function, are sympathetic, and raise the sense of life. Therefore the end, to which those look, annihilation, is dreaded; that to which these look, Nirvana, is desired. To become nothing, is measureless horror; to become all, is boundless ecstasy.



Maitreya Altarpiece, 524 CE. Gilded bronze,
height: 76.9 cm. The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, New York.



*The Simurgh Symbol, symbol of resurrection,
on the portal of the Madrasah of Nadir Divan Beghi, 1622.
Mosaic. Madrasah of Nadir Divan-Beghi, Bukhara, Uzbekistan.*

V

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come*

*From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.*

— William Wordsworth, excerpt from **Ode: Imitations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood**



Parinirvana (The Death of Buddha), end of the 6th century.
Rock-cut relief of left wall, length: 7 m.
Ajanta caves (Cave XXVI), near Aurangabad, Maharashtra.



Vishnu-Krishna as the Universal Cosmology
(Visvarupa), early 19th century. Hellenic.
Watercolour on paper, 38.5 x 28 cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

*The man whom these torment not, O chief of men,
balanced in pain and pleasure, steadfast, he is fitted for immortality.
The unreal hath no being; the real never ceaseth to be;
the truth about both hath been perceived by the seers of the Essence of things.
These bodies of the embodied One, who is eternal, indestructible
and boundless, are known as finite... He who regardeth
this as a slayer, and he who thinketh he is slain, both of them
are ignorant. He slayeth not nor is he slain. He is not born,
nor doth he die; nor having been, ceaseth he any more to be;*

unborn, perpetual, eternal and ancient, he is not slain when the, body is slaughtered. Who knoweth him indestructible, unborn, undiminishing, how can that man slay, O Partha, or cause to be slain? As a man, casting off worn-out garments, taketh new ones, so the dweller in the body, casting off worn-out bodies, entereth into others that are new. Weapons cleave him not, nor fire burneth him, nor waters wet him, nor wind drieth him away. Indivisible he, incombustible he, and indeed neither to be wetted nor dried away ; perpetual, all-pervasive, stable, immovable, ancient, unmanifest, unthinkable, immutable, he is called; therefore knowing him as such thou shouldst not grieve.

— Excerpt from the **Bhagavad Gita** (pp. 24-27),
Trans. by Annie Besant



Parinirvana, (detail), 12th century. Gal Vihara Temple,
Polonnaruwa. Rock-cut relief, length: 14.12 m. In situ.



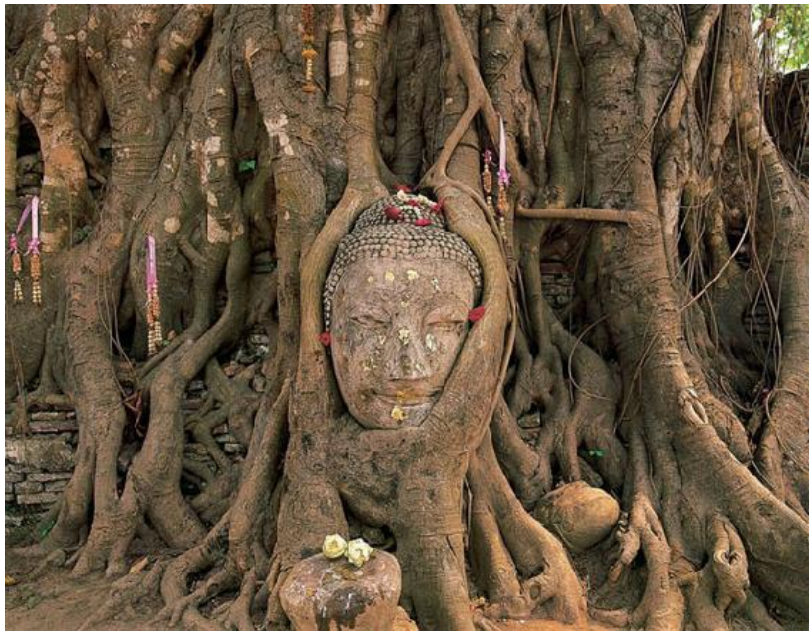
*Buddha Shakyamuni and Four Scenes from
His Life*, end of 11th century, Bihar.

Grey chlorite, 104.1 x 50.8 x 17.8 cm.

Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco.

That which is part of our souls is eternal... Those lives are countless, but the soul or spirit that animates us through the "book and volume" of the physical brain may forget events within the scope of one terrestrial life, the bulk of countless lives and events; yet the soul's whispers may be too soft, the sound of its words too far off the plane perceived by our physical senses; yet the soul's voice, which is the voice of events that are to come, is within its perceptive powers, and is ever present before its mind's eye.

— Helena Blavatsky, **Secret Doctrine, Vol. II**



Tree root engulfing the head of Buddha, 14th century.
Stone. Wat Mahathat, Ayutthaya, Thailand.

*And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)
I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,
O suns - O grass of graves - O perpetual transfers and promotions,
If you do not say anything how can I say anything?
Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the sougning twilight,
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk - toss on the black stems that decay in the muck,
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.
I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.*

— Walt Whitman, excerpt from **Song of Myself**

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The Crucifixion
The Crucifixion and the Iconoclasts, Chludov Psalter
Descent from Trayastrimsha Heaven
The Descent of Buddha Amida and the Guardians
False Door Stela of Iteti
Female Theatre Mask
Funerary Chamber, Tomb of Ramses I
Funerary Mask of Tutankhamun
Funerary Stela of Amenemhat
Grave Gods
Grave Naiskos:
*Relief of a Girl with Her Doll and Pet Goose
Relief of a Seated Man (The Lansdowne Homer)*
Gravestone of Apollonia
Gravestone of the Haterii Tomb: Crane and Tomb
The Great Pyramids of Giza*

Head of a Young Woman from a Grave Naiskos
 Human-headed cinerary urn
Icon of the Ladder of Divine Ascent
The Jataka Tales
 Kashi-tiles combined with a strong relief of the colours ultramarine, turquoise
 and white that symbolise the notion of Paradise (detail)
Maitreya Altarpiece
Male Theatre Mask (detail)
The Martyr of the Persecuted Saint Jacob
The Massacre of Innocents (detail)
Necklace of Princess Sathathor with Pectoral Bearing the Name of Senusret II
Padmasambhava and his Eight Manifestations
 Painted ceiling (detail)
 Panel from the Back of Tutankhamun's Golden Throne (detail)
Parinirvana
Parinirvana (The Death of Buddha)
Pashedu's Tomb (TT3)
Röttgen Pietà
Sarcophagus: Christ Restoring the Law
Sarcophagus from Acilia
Sarcophagus of Constantina
Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus
Sarcophagus of Laris Pulena from Monterozzi
Sarcophagus of Larthia Seianti
Sarcophagus of Pakhar in the Cachette of Deir el-Bahar
Sarcophagus of the Spouses from Cerveteri
Seated Buddha
Second Gilded Sarcophagus of Tutankhamun
Shadow of the Buddha
The Simurgh Symbol on the Madrasah of Nadir Divan Beghi
Statue of Isis
Statue of Osiris
Stela of Djeddjehutyankh
Tomb Chamber: The Heroic Death Depicted on Horseback
 Tomb of Agios Athanasios:
 Macedonian Soldiers
 The Young Lance Carrier, Guardian of the Tomb
Tomb of the Diver
Tomb of the Hunting and Fishing 1, 2
Tomb of the Lionesses
Tomb of the Reliefs
Tomb of the Swing: Feminine Figure Sitting
Tomb of the Triclinium: Male Musician
Tomb of Via dei Cristallini: a Griffin

Tombstone from Mnesarete

Tree root engulfing the head of Buddha

Triad of Menkaure

Vishnu-Krishna as the Universal Cosmology (Visvarupa)

Al-Balkhî, Abû Ma'shar

The Book of Nativities (Kitab al-mawalid)

Blake, William

Illustrations from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

Antaeus Setting down Dante and Virgil in the Last Circle of Hell (Inferno, XXXI)

Dante at the Moment of Entering the Fire (Inferno, XXVII)

The Stygian Lake, with the Ireful Sinners Fighting (Inferno, VII)

Illustration from Dante's Divine Comedy (Paradise XXVI)

God Judging Adam

Bondone, Giotto di

The Lamentation of Christ

Bosch, Hieronymus

The Garden of Earthly Delights (centre panel)

The Garden of Earthly Delights (left panel)

Botticelli, Sandro

Illustrations of Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

The Abyss of Hell (Inferno, XI)

Illustration of Canto XV, from Dante's Inferno

Illustration of Canto XVII, from Dante's Inferno

The Terrestrial Paradise - Dante (with Virgil and Statius) and Matilda at the River Lethe (Paradise, XXIII)

Primavera

Bruegel the Elder, Pieter

The Triumph of Death

Chagall, Marc

White Crucifixion

Corinth, Lovis

The Red Christ

Correggio, Antonio Allegri da

Assumption of the Virgin

Dalí, Salvador

Geologica Echo. La Pietà (after Michelangelo)

Delacroix, Eugène

The Barque of Dante (*Dante and Virgil in Hell*)

Doré, Gustave

Illustration from Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

Charon and the River Acheron (*Inferno*, III)

The Queen of Heaven (*Paradise*, XXXI)

Submersion in Lethe (*Purgatory*, XXXI)

The Styx-Filippo Argenti, (*Inferno*, VIII)

Erhart, Gregor

Vanitas

Fra Angelico

Christ Crowned with Thorns

The Coronation of the Virgin

The Last Judgement

Gauguin, Paul

Breton Calvary: The Green Christ

Géricault, Théodore

The Raft of the Medusa

Ghiberti, Lorenzo

The Gates of Paradise

Hodler, Ferdinand

The Day I

Hunt, William Holman

The Shadow of Death

La Tour, Georges de

Magdalene of the Night Light

Mantegna, Andrea

St Sebastian

Masaccio, Tommaso di Ser Giovanni di Simone

The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden

Master of 1333

Triptych: The Crucifixion surmounted by the Coronation of the Virgin (centre panel), The Angel of the Annunciation; The Virgin of Mercy; Saint Marguerite, Saint Catherine and One Saint (left wing), The Virgin of the Annunciation; The Nativity; Three Martyr Saints (right wing)

Master of Catherine of Cleves

Miniature from the Book of Hours of Catherine of Cleves: The Mouth of Hell

Master of the Beatitude of the Virgin Mary

The Last Judgement

Master René of Anjou

The Figure of Death Wearing the King's Crown

Matisse, Henri

The Joy of Life (La Joie de vivre)

Memling, Hans

Triptych of Earthly Vanity and Divine Salvation: Vanity (centre panel)

Triptych: The Last Judgement: The Damned Cast into Hell (centre panel)

Michelangelo

The Creation of Adam

The Last Judgement

The Last Judgement: Damned Soul Descending into Hell

Pietà

Michelino, Domenico di

Nave of the Duomo of Florence: Dante and the Divine Comedy

Modena, Giovanni da

The Punishments of the Damned in Hell

Nizami

Manuscript of Nizami's Khamsa (Five Poems): Ascent of the Prophet Mohammed

Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn)

Elevation of the Cross

Richier, Ligier

Tomb of René de Chalon, Prince of Orange: Flayed, or The Skeleton

Rodin, Auguste

The Gates of Hell

Rubens, Peter Paul

The Deposition of Christ (centre panel)

Umbrian Master

Man of Sorrows

Scopas (attributed to)

Grave Stone Stele of a Hunter with His Father, a Sitting Slave and a Dog

Sheffer, Ary

Francesca of Rimini and Paolo Malatesta seen by Dante and Virgil

Signorelli, Luca

The Damned Cast into Hell

Steenwyck, Harmen

Still Life: an Allegory of the Vanities of Human Life

Suleyman, Shah

Hasht Behesht: The Palace of the Eighth Paradise

Sutherland, Graham

The Crucifixion

Thanatos Painter (attributed to)

Mother and Maid at a Child's Tomb

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio)

Adam and Eve, c. 1550

Valdés Leal, Juan de

Finis Glorae Mundi (The End of Worldly Glory)